



future news

a newsletter from the *futures* foundation

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THE FUTURE OF WORK

Want a job? Try self-service

With virtually no growth in full-time employment in the last 25 years, how do we envisage the future of work? What do we tell our children about the skills they will need? Can today's young expect to have employers? Are schools and universities helping them learn the skills they will need, whether employed or not?

These questions were discussed by Futures Foundation members at meetings in Sydney and Melbourne this month.

As a starting point Futures Foundation chair, Charles Brass, who is widely recognised as an expert in the

future of work, outlined some of the changes we have seen in just one working lifetime. For example:

- the only category of employment that has kept pace with population growth since 1978 is self-employment
- less than 10% of the Australian workforce now works Monday to Friday, 9 to 5, down from 66% less than 40 years ago
- more than twice as many women are at work in 2004 as in 1964
- for every 100 *part-time* jobs in Australia in 1978, there were 440 part-time jobs in 2004, but for every 100 *full-time* jobs in Australia in 1978, there were 120 full-time jobs in 2004
- men working in full-time jobs in 2004 are working 44

hours a week compared with 41 in 1989 (38% are working 50 hours or more, with very little overtime paid)

- only 35% of men aged between 60 and 65 work full-time, but the average life expectancy of a man who turns 65 today is about 85 (88.8 for women)
- despite introduction of the superannuation guarantee charge nearly 20 years ago, the median lump sum

payment received by retirees in 2002 was \$62,000. And although 92% of employees have superannuation, this repre-

sents only about 50% of adult Australians.

Workshop participants, who included several school principals and careers advisers, went on to explore the five most commonly advocated futures for work, and concluded that not one of these anticipated futures was either appealing or sustainable.

"This was a somewhat sobering realisation for many participants, who are actively engaged either in schools or in businesses in preparing people for the future," Charles Brass said. "Coming just a couple of days after the launch of Richard Slaughter's new book, *Beyond Dystopia: creating social foresight*, the session highlighted the prevalence of dystopic visions for the future.

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**"The question for futurists is:
what kind of future
would we prefer to create?"**

PLUS

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would we prefer to create?"

At the level of individuals, it was no surprise to futurists to find that expert participants rated the most important skills for future school leavers would be inner skills -- such as adaptability, self-awareness and self-assurance, plus the skills in communication and relationships that help people to work collaboratively.

At the level of institutions and organisations, there is a clear need for broader connections to the living, changing world of work. "Our institutions need to be more responsive to change, more holistic, more sustainable, more inclusive", said Charles Brass. "And at the level of society, it's clearly time we learned to be more compassionate. We need to recognise that it is vitally important to create a system that is at least capable of including everybody. As the statistics show, the system we have today is clearly not capable of including everybody".ff

Has "Boomeritis" hijacked the future?

As the news media continue to report visible shifts in values in Australia, is it time to look for the long-anticipated emotional revolution among today's adults? Or is futurist Ken Wilber right when he says this revolution has been hijacked and stalled by the narcissism of the boomer generation that he calls "Boomeritis"? In recent years, *Future News* has reported the work of a number of researchers who have predicted significant value shifts in adult populations in the west.

Suits in Search of Simpler Lifestyle

"...new quantitative research by The Australia Institute documents the shift in priorities that has driven nearly one quarter of Australian adults to downshift in the past decade...."

- **Don Beck and Chris Cowan**, building on the work of Clare Graves, promote the rainbow concept of *Spiral Dynamics* to describe human growth through different sets of values (see p3). Their sophisticated colour-coding for each stage has been adopted by Wilber in his Integral Theory, and is increasingly being used as a common language by psychologists, consultants, human resources specialists and others to share understandings of the path of human development.
- **Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson** argue that since the 1960s, 26% of adults in the United States (50m people that they call the *Cultural Creatives*) have made a big shift in their worldview, values, and way of life. They point out the stunning speed of this emergence, over a single generation. A related survey by officials of the European Union in September 1997 suggested similar shifts in the 15 countries surveyed there.
- **Richard Florida**, Professor of Economic Development at Carnegie Mellon in the USA, counts his "creatives" at 38 million people, or 30% of all employed Americans. Looking at the connection between social change and community development his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class: How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, Everyday Life*, explores "why cities without gays and rock bands are losing the economic development race".

- **George Vaillant's** 2002 book, *Ageing Well*, reports the fascinating results of several long-term, prospective studies of ageing. On the way, he maps stages of emotional growth that consistently accompany the ageing process, and discusses a hierarchy of defences that change with maturity. His work, too, suggests this growth of emotional maturity is a common, although not inevitable, part of the personal journey as we age.
- Even the market researchers of advertising are picking up on the value shifts that may soon result in significant shifts in consumer behaviour. **Madelyn Hochstein**, president of the Daniel Yankelovich research group, told a New York audience last year that the US is entering a new era "which will see new behaviours, aspirations, employee expectations, public issues, business thinking... and new trends". In another evolutionary path of value shifts, the Yankelovich researchers tracked socio-historical steps from "*Moving Up*" (1940s to early 1960s), through "*Moving Out*" (1960s and 1970s) to "*Quality of Life*" (1980s-1990s) and now to "*The*

When Less Means More

"Affluence fatigue is creating a class of Australians who are dropping out of the rat-race...."

they say, goals include adding meaning to life – people want to be significant; to make a difference; and to preserve life – to find security.

Do these paths of change usefully map, and therefore predict, value changes to greater maturity as humans age? And if they do, what happens when we match this qualitative shift to the quantitative shift we also see – the demographics of today's ageing populations in the west? Will the double-whammy mean we're about to reach the critical mass that triggers a field shift? Can we hope for transformative change to a wiser world in the relatively short term? Is it possible the shadows of recent world politics could be overtaken by a much more compassionate approach to global leadership?

It may take a little longer. **Ken Wilber**, creator of

Integral Theory (which Richard Slaughter is incorporating into a whole new theory of futures studies -- see page 4), argues that Boomeritis, the social disease of the nineties and noughties, has stalled the process of emotional maturing. How? By hijacking its agenda with the massive egocentricity and narcissism

White Collar Blues

"...while the majority of downshifters sell up and leave town... statisticians and others who map how we live have detected a trend within the trend. There is a new wave of downshifters who don't want to leave it all behind; they still want to work, but they want to do it wearing a blue collar, not a white one. These are the downwardly mobile, chasing happiness instead of the dollar...."

of political correctness have served to iron out qualitative differences in human development that ought to be recognised and valued. On top of that, while many of the social advances of boomer times have been positive, many (such as pluralism) have gone too far in isolation, driven by egos that resist integration. As a character in his recent novel, called *Boomeritis*, explains: "Extreme pluralism means that everything is equal, nothing is higher or better or superior. There are no levels of consciousness, with some being higher than others, for they must all be viewed as equivalent. And therefore all the different levels of consciousness are denied, collapsed, reduced to flatland. Then several ugly things happen, here in flatland. One, any and all preconventional, narcissistic impulses can pretend to be higher postconventional ideals, since they are all supposed to be the same. This is the heart of boomeritis, narcissism dressed up in high-sounding ideals. Flatland inhabited by a very big ego -- there is boomeritis! But the real travesty is simply flatland itself -- completely ignoring the rich multidimensional interior waves of consciousness unfolding."

For more on the work of Ken Wilber and the group of leading-edge thinkers linked with the Integral Centre, visit www.integralnaked.com.

cism of the boomer generation. For a start, Wilber argues that recent decades

SPIRAL DYNAMICS

Tracking the emergence of v-memes as organising principles in human nature

The word "meme" was introduced by the British biologist Richard Dawkins to describe cultural information that is passed from one person to another, distributed through social systems, much as genes are distributed through biological systems. Spiral Dynamics combines this idea with Dr Clare Graves' important work on value systems, to make v-memes.

Beige v-meme Survival Band, instinct driven
Automatic/Instinctive: "I survive". Biology driven, sensory. Humans as smartest of animal species.

Transition: awareness of distinct self, awakening of cause and effect, concerns with threats/fears, survival requires group effort.

Purple v-meme Tribal Order, safety driven
Animistic/Tribalistic: "We are safe". Mystical spirits, signs, and nests for safety. Individual subsumed in group. Powerful shaman/chieftains.

Transition: emergence of dominant ego, self more powerful than group, confronts adversaries and dangerous forces to control, niches are limited.

Red v-meme Exploitive Empire, power driven
Egocentric/Exploitive: "I control". Power impulses and displays, hedonism and immediate sensory satisfaction, spontaneous, guilt-free, daring.

Transition: recognition of mortality, quest for meaning and purpose in life, extended time-frame/future, consequential thinking arises.

Blue v-meme Authority Structure, order driven
Absolutistic/Saintly: "We are saved". Only one right way to think/be, finds purpose in causes and dedications to crusades, guilt-based obedience to higher authority.

Transition: aspires to better life now for self, challenges higher authority to produce tangible results, seeks one best way among many options.

Orange v-meme Strategic Enterprise, success driven
Materialist/Achiever: "I improve". Search for best answers and ways to advance, goal-oriented planning and strategies to do better, economic focus of competition.

Transition: discovers material wealth does not bring happiness or peace, renewed need for community, sharing, and richer inner life, sensitivity to have, have-not gaps.

Green v-meme Social Network, people driven
Relativistic/Sociocentric: "We become". Consensus-seeking spirituality, egalitarian and humanitarian, tolerance/acceptance of a range of differences.

Transition: overwhelmed by economic and emotional costs of caring, confronted by chaos/disorder, need for tangible results and functionality, knowing moves above feeling.

Yellow v-meme Systemic Flow, process oriented
Systemic/Integrative: "I learn". Big-picture views of living systems, integrative structures and forms in evolutionary flows, understands chaos and change are natural.

Transition: senses order within chaos, search for guiding principles, whole-earth problems arise as technology connects everybody, spirituality back with physics.

Turquoise v-meme Holistic Organism, synthesis oriented
Globalist/Renewalist: "We experience". Synergy of life forms /forces, planetary concerns rank above group interests, reordered world for new meanings & good of the commons.

Transition: the next system will be a new form of expressiveness, extended to the planetary level. Global problems will appear to require unified control, a new way of being to fit a world where collective living has changed the milieu.

The next tier begins with a coral meme....

Integration: the new wave for futures

Practical futuring work around the world is at risk from superficial thinking, dated methods and redundant paradigms, says Professor Richard Slaughter of the Australian Foresight Institute at Swinburne University. The good news is that new approaches now offer the opportunity to lift standards and improve results.

"There are still gaps between the complex, embedded, nature of futures problems and the capacity of the resources that have been devoted to dealing with them," he said. "While a great deal of futures work has been very successful -- especially in raising awareness of the future and our ability to influence it -- we now have the opportunity to deliver even better results by taking advantage of new thinking, new methodologies and new attitudes."

The Institute has used the body of work by Ken Wilber called Integral Theory as the basis for its new approach, Integral Futures. The subject, as the first course unit of its kind anywhere in the world, is now being offered as part of the Institute's group of science degree and postgraduate courses in Strategic Foresight.

"We found that most, if not all, of the standard futures methodologies were aimed at dealing with change processes in the outer world, so the field had been heavily one-sided from its inception," Richard Slaughter said. "Critical futures work originally developed in response to this and drew attention to the way personal and social factors affect the way we perceive and interact with the world -- an area that had been widely overlooked. Soon tools and methods (such as Causal Layered Analysis, the Transformative Cycle, Metascanning and Anthropological FS) developed within this domain of human and social interiors. And now Integral Future Studies provides an even larger framework that opens up new directions."

Professor Slaughter argues that far too many people have begun practising futures without fully understanding its foundations. Many of them are

using inappropriate, one-sided methods. His response to this is to suggest the attainment of 'professional literacy' as a necessary prerequisite for practice -- as in other professions. If that were to happen, he believes, the links between understanding and practice would become much clearer, and the clients of futurists would be assured of competent, quality services.

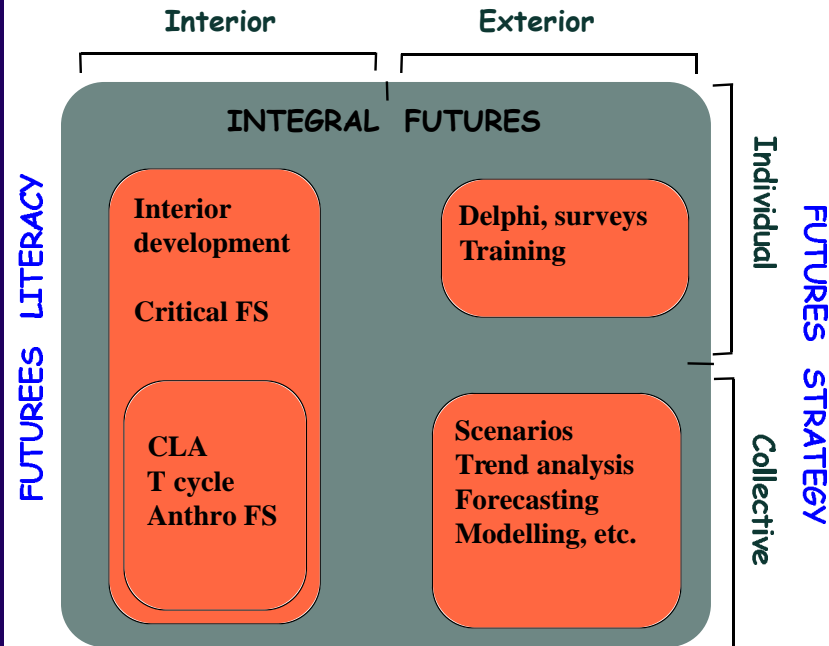
"In adopting Integral Futures as a foundation for both theory and practice, those who are currently teaching the next generation of futures/foresight practitioners can begin to represent the field in ways that are more coherent, well-grounded and useful than before."

He emphasises that integral futures work is not simply an alternative to more limited and partial approaches. Rather, it is a way of bringing together work from many different streams and traditions of inquiry.

"An integral futures approach allows us for the very first time to balance external phenomena with internal ones: that is, futures work that takes as its main focus the study of continuity and change in the external world can now be balanced by and with some very sophisticated frameworks for understanding the inner worlds of people and cultures.

"The upshot is that futures tasks can now be approached more systematically -- and more successfully -- than ever before."

LITERACY, STRATEGY & METHODOLOGIES IN FS



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Of the many positive outcomes of this move, Richard Slaughter especially welcomes the opportunities for innovation and development in futures methodologies.

"We will see quite new methods emerging from the inner domains," he said. "At the same time, the more traditional methods will also gain a new lease of life. What has most centrally emerged in this perspective is that it is depth within the practitioner that evokes depth and capability in whatever method is being used." *ff*

Weaving designs in time and space to create a "sustainable service society": Ezio Manzini

Old ideas of "product" and "service" must give way to new concepts of co-operative value-adding systems if we are to create a sustainable society, says Professor Ezio Manzini, professor of industrial design at the Politecnico di Milano Indaco and at Hong Kong Polytechnic. He was speaking at the School of Design, Architecture and Building at UTS in Sydney this week.

"If we look toward the future and imagine a sustainable society, it will not be based on the same principles we have today. It will be a transformed society. Production will not be just a matter of creating products and services, but a much more complex interface between production and consumption."

Professor Manzini pointed out that past definitions of service described a "form of interaction where one person generates a benefit for somebody else". A product, on the other hand, was a "physical form of material in space."

A better definition of service would be "interaction in space and time", introducing time as the context in which the product and the person using it interact.

"In our culture we deal with three dimensional space. We do not have so many tools to talk about time. If you speak about a product it is enough to talk about giving form to space ('a machine is a service frozen into form'). If you talk about service, the main variable in which a service is organised is time."

"These definitions are too obvious. They have too rigid a definition of tasks and give the user a mainly passive role. And the material dimension of services is totally ignored."

"The idea that the service transaction is an immaterial one is a misunderstanding. It is misleading to think the products are material and the services are immaterial. It is more useful to think about hybrid entities: a form of interaction where actors, products, places and infrastructure co-produce commonly recognised benefits. This is co-production of value."

"Services are actually interconnections in contexts, a hybrid of material and immaterial. Service design is more about verbs than nouns -- the relationship has more to do with time than space. For example, we can choose to think about 'a washing machine' or about washing; about 'a car' or about mobility."

Professor Manzini discussed recent ideas about service economies, including the "full service" economy (everybody living in a grand hotel) and the "total experience" economy (living in a theme park). In the first, the provider is conceived as the problem solver and the user as a lazy person, so the service becomes a disabling system. In the second, the provider is conceived as the movie-maker, the provider of the experience. Again, users are seen as a passive audience, and the service becomes a distracting system.

In contrast, promising emerging trends are being driven by new social demands, and in particular by

- the crisis of welfare systems
- the diffusion of information and communications technology, and
- the emergence of sustainable ways of living.

Key factors creating new services include growing

recognition of the role of the commons, and development of comprehensive service systems that Professor Manzini calls "enabling solutions".

"We value the commons only when they are at risk," he pointed out. "We take fresh

air for granted until we don't have it any more. We take fresh water for granted until we have to buy it in bottles. We used to be able to take it for granted that kids could play safely in the street."

"A lot of the products and services we need today are not helping to improve life, but simply aiming to restore the commons -- for example, the bottling of tap water, the provision of security products."

When it comes to products and services, Ezio Manzini argues that designers can play a role in creating double value: not just providing a direct service, but also an indirect one by providing some improvement in the quality of the commons.

"We need to recognise, for example, that the bread shop in the neighbourhood is not just a bread shop. It also delivers a community role. A food shop or restaurant need not just sell food: it can also help people to learn about eating well or cooking."

"(In Japan, the government had to organise classes for retired men who could not cook a cup of rice

because they spent all their life being served by someone else in the passive-consumer society.)

"These are enabling solutions. They could allow us to rebuild a service society with a different meaning of service... around the issue of how to regenerate the commons... instead of the ongoing, disabling trends generated by a misunderstood idea of comfort."

"That misunderstood idea is that the best of comfort is not to do anything. It is true we sometimes don't want to do anything but not true that we always want to do nothing. In fact, we can find our highest pleasure in doing things."

"We have to imagine a society where everyone has capabilities and uses them - the situation creates happiness because you are doing things."

This kind of society would be healthier and happier than our present service economy with its disabling solutions -

services that promote user passivity and ignorance.

"In our present system, people and communities are less

and less able to solve their problems by themselves. We have to imagine a system that, in the words of the Chinese philosopher, teaches people to fish instead of just giving them a fish."

How, then, do we move from disabling solutions to enabling solutions?

"We need to design services where the idea of co-producing value is taken seriously. These will be services where the actors are considered as smart and active people, that is, as part of the solution."

Professor Manzini offered examples of enabling systems, from "how to" cooking kits to instruction books for communities wanting to set up a local festival. He talked about new barter organisations, solidarity purchasing groups, bringing together people with similar interests, community-managed gardens and more.

"Systems like these are processes, not just starting points," said the professor. "And the first step in setting them up is communication: we begin with strategic conversations to create a system."ff

"We need to design services where the idea of co-producing value is taken seriously."

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "FUTURES"?

The field of futures studies covers a huge territory -- perhaps the biggest there is.

Many of its best researchers and thinkers work on global issues: world peace, world population, poverty, health, climate change and other major areas of exploration. Others prefer to work on the future at home. These people are actually creating the future by living it, designing and modelling new ways of living and working, new ways of being.

Futures scholars and researchers explore the theoretical underpinnings of the way we understand the world -- its past, its present, its future. They are seeking new ways to challenge and stretch those understandings because these establish our attitudes and values, and those in turn determine behaviour.

Some futurists prefer to emphasise the measurable, checking research data like demographics for trends that will point toward the future. Others make their contribution with their imagination, creating new stories through which we can better understand our-

EDITORIAL

In the last issue of *Future News*, I promised a series about the discipline of futures studies and the work of futurist. As it happens, this entire issue seems to be about little else! As usual, a clear theme has emerged from the collected stories for the issue: this time, as is entirely appropriate, it is the core territory of futures itself. On this page is an outline of the way I have introduced futures studies to beginners over the past few years. In coming issues I will feature the words of others who work with the Futures Foundation, each with a different focus and flavour.

Jan Lee Martin

selves and our possible futures. Perhaps the most effective are those who can combine rich understandings of the past with their exploration of the future, and combine their observation of the outer world with rich understandings of our inner worlds. Indeed the latest version of futures studies, Integral Futures (see page 4) offers a framework that accommodates all of these and helps to balance and integrate a variety of approaches.

So there are many ways to be a futurist. Most of them begin with a personal commitment to sharing responsibility for the future in the present. At the same time, there is a great deal of emphasis on the need to avoid missionary zeal: while futurists can and do help others to create better futures, it is not their job to tell them what those futures should look like.

Addressing the challenge

Perhaps the very first step in exploring the future is understanding that we don't have to be victims of the future but that we can make choices -- and the earlier we make them, the more choices we have. Futures tools, concepts and methodologies are growing and changing every day, as we all learn together to find new ways to respond to change. The Australian tradition of futures work includes data-based, empirical work. And it adds the creativity of new concepts, of cross-cultural understandings, and taps the energy and diversity that Australia is so fortunate to have.

Seeing the whole system

Understanding systems thinking and adopting a systemic view of the present helps us to understand what choices we might have for the future. Systems thinking brings a perspective of wholeness instead of the old machine-like, take-it-apart-and-we'll-know-how-it-works worldview which dominated the industrial age. As we review the journey of science from last century's certainties to the uncertainties, chaos and complexities of today, we can recognise our own

limitations as conscious components of living systems -- which leads us to the lessons we can learn from the study of living systems. We might ask, is it time to understand ourselves, our organisations and our communities in a more ecological way?

Understanding the context

In systems thinking, and in futures work, it is vital to understand the importance of context and its influence on people, organisations and communities. By monitoring contextual changes in any system we gain a better idea of what further changes to expect and how we might respond most effectively.

In the physical context within which we live and work, perhaps the most obvious signal of change is the accelerating shift to sustainability - for obvious reasons. Some of the major opportunities of the new century lie in reinventing the way we produce and deliver goods and services as well as reinventing how we think about goods and services themselves. Will more profits come from restoration than exploitation? Can we design what Ezio Manzini calls "enabling solutions" (see p5), that replenish the global commons as they meet human needs in a sustainable way?

In the social context, dramatic change is transforming relationships between people in many kinds of communities, including organisations and governments. We are learning new skills, building new relationships, as we move from top-down hierarchies to participative networks in all the many ways we organise ourselves in our societies. We are seeing new views of legitimacy in the corporate sector, new relationships with a growing list of stakeholders, even whole new ways of assessing what success really means. And the social crisis of demographics is focussing our attention on the role of social capital.

The cultural context is the ground from which all other change springs. If we understand how deep

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What do we mean by futures? (from p 6)

change is occurring in values, mental models and even our cultural mythology, we have a much better chance of understanding what is likely to occur in the outer world in which we all live and work and learn. Transforming change is on the way, with the western industrial worldview under serious challenge at home, even as it seeks to impose its will on the rest of the world.

Whatever else the future brings, I anticipate that this century will be the century of the invisible.

Success for people, organisations and communities will come from the way they gather and share information, knowledge, wisdom; from their rate of learning, adaptation, innovation; from the quality of their culture, values, relationships; and from design, ideas, creativity.

How do we manage these invisibles? How do we judge their success?

Indeed, the question of success reaches more widely than that, at all these levels. Maybe that would make a good theme for our next issue....

Bottled tap water meets "aspirational needs"

In September's *Future News* we quoted John Vidal, in the *Guardian UK*, on the private sector's poor record in the water industry. Now *The Telegraph* reports that Coke's latest brand to hit the UK market, Dasani, offers tap water from the London water supply in a bottle at a recommended 53p for 500ml. It says Coca Cola does quite a lot to the water, which is piped into a very expensive plant... but it's selling at about \$1.30 "what can normally be obtained by a slight movement of the wrist". According to Coke, the product is designed to meet the "aspirational" needs of customers.

Just days later, Associated Press reported that Coca-Cola had paid \$US8.4 million (\$11.2m) in bonuses to its top executives last year, and put the present value of its retiring CEO's stock awards at \$US86m. It also paid out millions of dollars to companies owned by some of its directors, or in which they held a major stake. "Corporate governance experts credited Coke for the disclosures...but some question the justification for the compensation and business ties at a time when the company is downsizing and there is a heightened awareness about accountability in corporate America."

Working longer.....and longer

As the Treasurer tells Australians they will have to work longer, demographers are revealing that longer doesn't just mean longer: it means longer and longer!

Everyone has seriously underestimated how long we are likely to live, according to Dr Heather Booth, a demographer at the Australian National University. In a study co-authored with Leonie Tickle, associate professor of actuarial studies at Macquarie, she forecasts that women aged 50 in 2001 will on average live to 88.8 and their male counterparts will live to 84.4. If she survives to 88.8 years, the female baby boomer can expect to live another 8.1 years.

The researchers say 52 per cent of female baby boomers will live to 90, and so will 34 per cent of the men. This compares with official life expectancy figures of 82.6 for women and 77.4 for men.

What can futuring do for you?

The Futures Foundation is happy to work with members and other organisations who want to take the journey of exploration that is futures. We emphasise that this is a journey of shared learning. We do not undertake to deliver slick, slap-on solutions. (We don't think they work.) Instead we offer challenges, pose questions, invite critiques and offer signposts to other sources of learning. We recommend a senior futurist or futurists, make the introductions, support your journey with all our resources. How can this help? It can:

- highlight assumptions about the world that are implicitly held by people in your organisation, explore their relevance in different circumstances, check that they are not self-limiting
- review your planning processes to check that plans are developed which can deliver desired performance outcomes under a wider range of likely future scenarios
- introduce new ways of measuring and rewarding success so that both short and

longer term interests of stakeholders are appropriately balanced (this may elicit new ideas about what we mean by "success")

- help you identify resources and potential allies that you may not have realised were "out there"
- help you recognise and manage new, often intangible, forms of assets
- help your people move more successfully towards a world where success will come from intangibles - from ideas, knowledge, innovation, creativity, values, relationships and other areas that today's executives have not been taught to manage.

All this makes for an exciting journey. It can transform people, organisations and communities, help them cross the "culture gap" between the past and the future. And it can inspire people to extraordinary commitment and performance. That's why we chose as our mission statement:

"inspiring ways to create the future".

For more information call Charles Brass at 1 300 727 3283.

Signals in the noise

Women's rights linked to water rights

Consumers International (CI), which represents more than 250 consumer organisations in 115 countries, says that following International Women's Day it will move to celebrate the powerful role that women consumer activists play in the promotion of consumer protection and basic human rights--especially the right to water. Theme for its observance of consumer rights day this year is that "Water is a consumer right," and that women are in the forefront of needing and securing that right.

Inter Press service 09 03 04

1184

Election monitors take on Florida

An international group that usually monitors elections in developing democracies said Monday it would take up posts at Florida precincts in November in hopes of averting another debacle when voters pick the next U.S. president. Four years after Florida became the object of international ridicule, officials for the Catholic group Pax Christi USA will place monitors from 30 countries at polls in four Florida counties that were at the center of the 2000 U.S. presidential election dispute.

Reuters 09 03 04

1185

Seeds of distraction

The biotech companies want us to consider everything except their motives, writes George Monbiot. "The question is as simple as this: do you want a few corporations to monopolise the global food supply? If the answer is yes, you should welcome the announcement the government is expected to make today, that the commercial planting of a GM crop in Britain can go ahead. If the answer is no, you should regret it. No one in her right mind would welcome this, so the corporations must persuade us to focus on something else.

Guardian/UK 09 03 04

1186

First robot moved by muscle power

A silicon microbot just half the width of a human hair has begun to crawl around a laboratory, using legs powered by the pulsing of living heart muscle fuelled by a simple glucose nutrient in a Petri dish.

New Scientist

28 02 04

1187

Computer, print me a fuel pump

A new process called "rapid prototyping", that creates 3D items out of material printed layer by layer, was designed to create cheap components for testing in the US aerospace program. They tested so well that this 3D printing process is now attracting a lot more attention. When the properties of materials used this way are better understood, the technique offers huge promise for producing one-off designs in small quantities.

New Scientist

06 03 04

1188

Spirituality as the fourth bottom line

Organisations have their own interests -- profit, survival -- but they also live in a local and global community and are increasingly being forced to be accountable to them. Sohail Inayatullah explores shifts in the measures of success in organisations and in society, including the growing interest in the spiritual dimension.

New Renaissance

www.ru.org

1189

Is the global wage gap closing?

Sociologist Glenn Firebaugh claims recent shifts represent "a real sea change in global income inequality". Incomes are growing rapidly in Asia, though inequality is increasing within nations such as the USA and in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Futurist

March-April 2004

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Nanotech: how to share its benefits

Futures Foundation member Don Maclurcan is researching ways of addressing the health gap through appropriate disease solutions in developing nations. His UTS doctoral project aims to:

- Place nanotechnology in a global health and development context;
- Assess its potential as an 'intermediate', appropriate medical technology;
- Draw together experts in relevant fields to discuss such issues;
- Stimulate global discourse on the distribution of nanotechnology; and
- Outline the mechanisms by which a more equitable distribution of its benefits might be secured.

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