



WHATEVER NEXT...FOR AUSTRALIA?

Hundreds of delegates gathered in Melbourne last week to explore Australia's alternative futures at the Future Summit organised by the Australia Davos Connection. The program focussed on economic futures -- but should it have set these in context? asks Margot Brodie ([see story p2](#)).

That's exactly what The Australia Institute wants to do. Last week it published a "Manifesto for Wellbeing", inviting us to think about what we really mean by progress. Australians who share its hopes for a better future can sign on at its website, www.wellbeing-manifesto.net ([see story p3](#)).

These events highlight the difference between the dominant economic paradigm of recent years to one that sees society as more than a marketplace.

Many Australians are now feeling disenfranchised in a political landscape that offers them only what they see as unpalatable or unsatisfactory choices. They note the absence of an inspiring vision of the future from any lofty peak in that landscape, let alone a bright, guiding star from the night sky.

Of course, as we consider the future we must chal-

lenge our assumptions, says senior futurist Tony Stevenson, immediate past president of the World Futures Studies Federation. He takes a critical futures view of some of the ideas we take for granted and invites us to "think the unthinkable" as a starting point for creating new futures ([see story p4](#)).

The optimists among us see good news on the way with grassroots leadership breaking out all over the land, engaging new generations of citizens with fresh views of the future. Some of them are already climbing the conceptual mountains, identifying new courses to better futures. So who are they?

Jose Maria Ramos was one of the first graduates of the Australian Foresight Institute's degree course in futures studies. He has published a monograph that identifies some of the big questions facing Australia and describes the futures resources in this country which could be tapped to address those questions. His "metascan" of the futures field in Australia lists more than 50 practitioners or organisations "committed to looking into the future in a professional and rigorous way" ([see story p4](#)).

Other people working hard to create better futures include thousands of citizens in organisations committed to protecting and restoring the physical environment, levelling some of the inequalities in our social environment, promoting fresh thinking and new approaches in our creative and cultural environment.

Many are working in their own communities to create new futures for themselves, their families and their neighbours. The Futures Foundation has been involved with many such activities, like Gosford City

Council's Vision 2025 program now under way on the Central Coast of New South Wales with US futurist Steven Ames ([see story p5](#)). Futurists around the world are engaged in similar programs: summaries of some of them can be found in the report we prepared for Melbourne City Council back in 2002 (soon to be reproduced, with permission, at our website).

So those who feel despondent about the future might benefit from engagement with the futures community, in its many guises. Remember what Eleanor Roosevelt said? "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

New power tool for futurists

A new generation in applied futures arrives this week with the latest version of *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* from Professor Richard Slaughter. "Like its predecessor, this is a superb collection of sound theoretical knowledge for professional futurists," says Jan Lee Martin, who will launch the new edition at an event on Wednesday 18 May (see our website for details).

"But that's not all. In its new incarnation, it is also a very practical aid to anyone working with deep structural and cultural change in organisations. And as we all know, that kind of change is the key to future success."

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THE FUTURE SUMMIT 2005 "Scaling the heights to a prosperous tomorrow"

China is predicted to have an impact on Australia 10 times greater than that of Japan 40 years ago. So it's hardly surprising the Future Summit 2005 in Melbourne this month focused heavily on Australia/Asia engagement and how to achieve sustainable prosperity in this new environment, reports Futures Foundation member Margot Brodie.

The opening address by Jonathon West, an Australian associate professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Business Administration, highlighted the perils of Australians not fully grasping the shift in business dynamics in this new Asia.

"Yes, there are great opportunities [for Australia] to sell to China. But China is also emerging as a strong competitor in the things we want to sell to the world," he said. "Rather than China's advantage being cheap unskilled labour, its fundamental advantage is cheap, skilled labour.

"China is graduating 500,000 engineers a year. They are not thinking about how to consume Australian products. They are thinking about how to make products the US and Australia make, how to replace our products and sell them to the world."

While Australia has recently enjoyed a record period of economic growth, the changes foretold by Professor West -- and the need to identify and address key issues and threats to ensure Australia has a strong role in this new environment -- were reflected in the central theme running through the conference: "investing in Australia's future".

Future Summit Chairman Michael Roux encouraged participants to explore how "to build a prosperous nation in conjunction with our Asian neighbours and our other trading partners throughout the world". Discussion across the three days centred on Australia's future from an economic perspective - that is, productivity, competitiveness and economic growth being at the very heart of solving our problems. Key business leaders and politicians

championed the pursuit of economic growth as the elixir for delivering social advancement and a prosperous nation. Others reminded us that successful economic progress hinges on good management, the key contention being a nation "has to be in good shape economically to be able to go off and do good things."

The Reverend Tim Costello, World Vision CEO, brought us back to a sobering reality when he posed the question: "But when do we have 'enough' to focus on other things?"

And what are those other 'good things'?

"It fell to the younger participants to challenge the dominant economic paradigm"

The opening of the Summit saw the 400 delegates -- from business, political, community and academic spheres -- vote climate change, education and Australian identity as the most critical issues for the future. As Australia confronts a myriad of urgent local concerns and with big global issues afoot - such as poverty, biodiversity loss, degradation of the natural environment - it was puzzling that 'Australian identity' should be one of the foremost concerns. Rather than merely indulgent nationalistic introspection, as some suggested, it perhaps revealed something far deeper: a yearning for a future that embraces a sense of belonging and knowing who we are -- a vision of a future rolled up with social values.

It was here that the Summit's prevailing discussion seemed a little out of step with the emerging undercurrent. With emphasis on tackling issues from an economic perspective, broader visions of what Australia could be in the future -- visions about interconnectedness, interdependence and community values -- were virtually ignored.

While observing that the best safety net for change was a strong economy, Australian

Competition and Consumer Commission Chairman Graeme Samuels drew attention to the need for organisations to manage and respond to community values and expectations.

Introducing the notion of 'corporate social sensibility' whereby organisations become attuned to the broader community, Mr Samuels suggested we move beyond the tick box mentality that measured social responsibility through a corporate index.

Carol Schwartz, Director of Our Community, took this further when she observed that corporate social responsibility should be a philosophical aim, not a separate business activity. She made a strong case for companies to do more than just hand over a cheque or truck workers in t-shirts out to help a charity for a day. What if workers asked for time off to take on leadership roles in the community, such as coaching the local junior soccer team - isn't that more valuable? Or would it be perceived as just an excuse to 'goof off'?

It fell to the younger participants -- Generation Y, the products of the 1980s - to challenge the dominant economic paradigm, with comments such as "economic wealth doesn't equal happiness" - "people are looking for meaning", and as IAG Corporate Sustainable Development Manager Jason Yat-sen Li said "Economic wealth, devoid of values, is meaningless - especially if we destroy the natural environment".

This week Australia delivered another multi-billion dollar yearly surplus: don't we have enough now to start focusing on the other "good things"?

Values, community and relationships underpin a successful society and people need to feel that they belong in order to want to participate. It is by satisfying the yearning for wellbeing and belonging that people will be best positioned to focus on other good things and make the necessary changes to build a prosperous future.

Margot Brodie

THE WELLBEING MANIFESTO

Many Australians feel that the political system has let them down, and that governments are not responding to their real concerns.

"We seem to have lost sight of a vision for a better society and entrusted our future to wherever the market takes us," says Clive Hamilton, director of The Australia Institute, a respected Canberra thinktank. That's why the Institute has developed a "Manifesto for Wellbeing", which it is offering to the Australian public for consideration and discussion.

"We take as our starting point the belief that governments in Australia should be devoted to improving our individual and social wellbeing," said Dr Hamilton, who for years has researched the nature and directions of change of perceived wellbeing in Australia. "We now know a great deal about the factors that enhance our wellbeing and those that diminish it. Increasingly the negatives seem to outweigh the positives, despite our affluence. The Manifesto we have developed is a blueprint for true progress in Australia."

Just days after the Manifesto was published, the Institute has been overwhelmed by the response. In fact, so many calls and contributions have been received that it is looking for practical ways to move forward with discussion of the Manifesto without neglecting its primary obligations in research.

"The initial reaction has been extremely enthusiastic," Dr Hamilton said. "We seem to have struck a chord in the Australian psyche. Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised, because the manifesto was based on extensive research. Australians have told us what they



care about, what they value. So when we put it into words in a manifesto and give it back to them, I suppose we should expect them to like it."

However not everyone is wholeheartedly in support of the initiative. "Some have reacted with the accusation that this is a Utopian dream, others point us to all the practical difficulties of making fundamental changes like this.

"The point is, though, that the most difficult change we have to make is a change of mind. We need new ways to think about how we approach issues like environmental sustainability or social justice, and that's what the Manifesto is intended to stimulate.

"Many of today's citizens have grown up in a culture of political conservatism, and have no experience of alternatives. Others have seen efforts for change come and go with varying levels of success and are intimidated by change.

"The people we hope will adopt this notion and move it forward are the ones who can see opportunity where others see challenge."

As George Bernard Shaw wrote: "some men see the world as it is and say 'why?'. We see it as it might be, and say 'why not?'"

The Australia Institute is planning some initial community meetings to discuss the Manifesto. It is also hoping to find a way to resource an online forum in which citizens who are interested in the initiative can exchange reactions to it and ideas for its future.

Meanwhile, futurists who are working with organisations and communities around Australia might win mutual benefit by using the manifesto as a topic for futures conversations, stimulating new thinking within their projects at the same time as they generate outputs to feed back into the Manifesto program.

Full text of the Wellbeing Manifesto is available at our website or theirs. Some highlights.....

Australians are three times richer than their parents and grandparents, but no happier. Despite evidence of a decline in national wellbeing, governments continue to put economic interests first. The obsession with economic growth means other things that could improve our wellbeing are sacrificed.....There is widespread community concern that the values of the market — individualism, selfishness, materialism, competition — are driving out more desirable values of trust, self-restraint mutual respect and generosity. Many people feel alienated from the political process; the main parties seem too alike and think of progress only in material terms.

The challenge of our age is to build a new politics that is committed...to improving our wellbeing.

What can governments do?

*Provide fulfilling work * Reclaim our time * Protect the environment * Rethink education * Invest in early childhood * Build communities and relationships * A fairer society * Discourage materialism, promote responsible advertising * Measure what matters*

Towards a flourishing society

The question for Australia in the 21st century is not how we can become richer: it is how we can use our high standard of living to improve our wellbeing.

A flourishing society is not a futile hope. Australian democracy offers people the opportunity to shed their cynicism and commit themselves to creating a better future.

So what about it? The Australia Institute invites comment at www.wellbeingmanifesto.net.

What is the state of Australia's future?

Will Australia find itself mired in regional conflicts, or forge lasting and peaceful futures globally? Will we ignore the limits of our environment, or find practical solutions that create conditions for long-term environmental sustainability?

How will the economic system evolve to reflect issues of inequality and sustainability? These are difficult questions that are far bigger than any one person or institution, yet ignored at great peril, writes Jose Maria Ramos in a monograph for the Australian Foresight Institute, entitled *Foresight Practice in Australia: a meta-scan of practitioners and organisations*.

Explaining, for the uninitiated, that there is a discipline in Australia and worldwide known as Futures Studies or foresight, Jose Ramos introduces his metascan of the field in Australia, which identified more than 50 practitioners or organisations "committed to looking into the future in a professional and rigorous way".

And while the number, diversity and quality of foresight

practice in Australia should be a cause for optimism, he says, it represents a largely untapped source of knowledge, wisdom and vision.

"The majority of practitioners are 'progressive' in their interests," he wrote. "That is, they are involved in research or advocacy aimed at systemic improvement, not just the narrow interests of clients.

"Further, the majority of practitioners use methods and approaches far beyond naive forecasting and trend extrapolation, incorporating an understanding of systems thinking, social complexity and in many cases, how worldviews and belief systems shape social futures.

"Foresight practitioners in Australia have a broad array of approaches and methods, focused primarily on structural issues (economy, technology, environment and public policy) and to a lesser extent on cultural issues (social justice, collective images of the future, worldviews and value systems).

FULL STORY AT WWW.FUTUREFOUNDATION.ORG.AU



Upside-down leadership and challenging our assumptions may be the way we can create better futures for Australia in a changing world.

BEYOND WESTMINSTER: RETHINKING OZ

"How will Australia handle its relationships with both the US and China in the future, when these two behemoths may be arm-wrestling for political and economic superiority?" asks senior futurist Tony Stevenson.

"Will it continue to deny declining ecological and cultural diversity, and global climate change, when research and development, virtually ignored, may find new opportunities in renewable energy and environmental rehabilitation and protection?"

"How can Australia expect prosperity and security in the future when short-term thinking ignores long-term investment in social and physical infrastructure, sinks its education system and closes its eyes to the widening gaps in wealth and knowledge, at home and overseas?"

Each question as challenging as the next, these are just a few of the topics that Professor Stevenson, immediate past president of the World Futures Studies Federation, raises and discusses in a collection of recent work on the future of Australia and the world, entitled "Rethinking Oz".

Underlying the whole body of work lies his conviction that fundamentally new ways of thinking are needed if we are to change the threats of the future into opportunities.

"Recent suggestions to reinvent Oz with long-term vision, thoughtful as that is, still fail to step outside the mindset that frames competitive Westminster politics, limited by its institutionalised confrontation and either-or thinking," he said. "These policy ideas need to go beyond the futile oppositions of political difference to understand the basis for conventional thought systems. That has to happen if we are to rethink the very fundamentals. And we must."



While some contemporary Aussies speak with a unique voice, Tony Stevenson says, most others have "swapped their British legacy for the can-do illusions of the Wizard of Oz.

"The American neo-liberal individualism that took hold in the southern Oz during the 1980s has seen the larrikin become deputy sheriff of Washington's heartless politics and economics, less than endearing in its South-East-Asian neighbourhood.

"But does Oz realise the attending problems cannot be solved by the industrialist thinking that bred them?"

"The present politics of predatory corporatism exploits social division, xenophobia and sexism to sate Australia's consumerist aspirations.

"This authoritarian thought system, deeply embedded in the Australian mind, reaches back through two millennia of Western civilisation, largely unchallenged by other philosophies and traditional wisdoms.

"It defines people's understandings of their world and thus inhibits creativity for dealing with the dilemmas and opportunities lying on the way to the future."

FULL STORY AT WWW.FUTUREFOUNDATION.ORG.AU

THE CREATIVE COAST? Community visioning in Gosford

"Virtually every step forward in the progress of mankind has begun with a dream," says planner/futurist Steven Ames of Oregon. "Seeing something in the mind's eye has been the first step to achieving it in reality."

Introducing the concept of community visioning to a workshop hosted by the Gosford City Council, he explained the process of visioning that has worked so well for many communities around the world, including Australia and New Zealand.

Participants in the workshop included a diverse range of community leaders, as well as Futures Foundation founding directors Peter Lazar and Jan Lee Martin, and project director Tim Longhurst.

"Gosford and the Central Coast offer unique challenges and opportunities for the future," said Peter Lazar, who has been active in the Central Coast community of Pearl Beach for many years.

"This area is significantly affected by the new Metropolitan Strategy for the City of Sydney. It has been selected by the State government as a destination for thousands of people that Sydney can't accommodate, yet it still doesn't have the infrastructure or community resources that it should have to maintain support to the people who are already here.

"Urgent physical crises, like water supply and transport, are interwoven with urgent social problems including unemployment, domestic violence, substance abuse and a high dependence on social welfare."

The work done by the Futures Foundation with the Jigsaw project in 2002 had already identified many of these problems. Jigsaw coordinates the activities of local and state government agencies, and others working to help young people up to the age of 24. Its research also highlights the social and physical challenges facing local leadership, and these were included in the participative futuring process undertaken by a group of high school students with the help of futurists from the Futures Foundation (including Steven Ames).

At the same time, it gave the students an opportunity to articulate positive visions for the future of the Central Coast.

The students' preferred vision for the future pre-



sented the Central Coast as a creative centre that was *welcoming* to diversity of people and ideas; *sustaining* in its approach to protection and use of its beautiful natural environment; and *enterprising* in the way it created value in a mixed, creative economy. (Interestingly, one of the less preferred scenarios that the students developed in this 2002 project envisaged a tsunami devastating the coast, resulting in a back-to-basics commitment to shared community development.)

In another Futures Foundation project on the Coast, Noel Winterburn worked with the citizens of Budgewoi to create a spark of community vitality in an area that had become bereft of vision or hope.

"This is a city that desperately needs a new vision for the future," said Peter Lazar. "But it also offers a marvellous opportunity for imaginative approaches like this to problems that haven't yet been solved by traditional means.

"An area of remarkable scenic beauty, the Central Coast enjoys a diverse and often highly creative population. Beaches and forests, as well as a web of waterways, pro-

vide instant infrastructure for tourism and wellbeing industries; the new values of the seachange generation are generating networks of home-based businesses; and it's a significant commercial and light industrial centre less than an hour from the major hub of Sydney.

"What a great opportunity for some really fresh thinking."

The Oregon model of community visioning used by Steven Ames (<http://www.communityvisioning.com>) may well provide the practical vehicle for this fresh thinking, with the support of the local Council, especially since it includes a program of events that invite the community to be part of the process.

"Visioning is a process in which a community thinks about the future it wants, develops a shared vision, and plans how to achieve it," Steven Ames told the working group at its first meeting in March. "It provides a clearer understanding of community values and incorporates it into planning; it identifies issues and trends that influence development in communities; it conveys a comprehensive future-orientated view to guide short and long-term decision making in the city; and it develops action plans and implementation tools to achieve a preferred future in the city."

Mayor of Gosford City, Malcolm Brooks, offered his personal thanks to the group for their participation and assured them of the commitment of his Council to an exciting new vision for the future. Members of Council's management team also reported the results of a major community survey conducted last year, and outlined their own planning targets for the 2025 visioning process.

The project's timeline provides for continuing workshops throughout the year, with January 2006 targeted for release of an agreed Vision Statement. Draft action plans will be prepared during the following weeks, and offered to the community for review by April 2006. From then on the process moves into implementation, with regular monitoring and review as a continuing part of the process.

HOW LONG DO YOU WANT TO LIVE?

Scientists at Cambridge University talk of an average human life span of 5000 years, at some time in the future - as soon as someone can solve the awkward problem of rejuvenating two-year-old mice. Meanwhile, an Australian researcher argues that love, in all its forms, may be able to slow the biological clock. Should they be talking to each other? Setting aside for the moment (with reluctance) the physical, social and ethical issues that arise from our curious fear of death - how many people can the planet stand, for heaven's sake? - it does seem that Aubrey de Grey of Cambridge could well have a word with Mark Cohen at RMIT in Melbourne. De Grey believes that if science can just work out how to get a middle-aged mouse to live an extra three years (three is normal life span), extreme human longevity is all but in the bag, writes Pip Cummins in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 02 05).

"Applying his engineering training to a biological problem, he has identified seven metabolic processes which he believes would have to be repaired or prevented to overcome ageing. Some of his propositions are already being worked on by scientists in various parts of the world; others are radical ambitions of his own devise, but he believes many of us could see all these treatments become available in our lifetimes - possibly only 25 years from now."

You can certainly see the logic of the engineer at work here. But is logic the right hammer for this nail?

Mark Cohen would rather talk about love. Founding professor of complementary medicine at RMIT in Melbourne, he researched the role of love in longevity and came up with results that might surprise Aubrey de Grey but would not surprise regular readers of *Future News* (see, for example, March 03).

"When you have love in your life it influences the laws of nature," he said. "For a start, it reduces the experience of time...So if you're doing an activity that you love to do, whether it's making paper aeroplanes or gardening or looking into the eyes of your lover, you get moments when time seems to stop, or it seems like five minutes but it's really been an hour." He quotes researchers working with rabbits on high cholesterol diets, who were puzzled to find one group lived about 60% longer than the other, on the same food. The only difference between the groups was that the longer-lived rabbits were fed by an assistant who cuddled and talked to them. (Earlier researchers, like Lyall Watson, reported a similar effect on plants.) A study of 1000 Israeli men with heart disease found the relationship with their wives affected their health, with those who felt they were loved experiencing a 50% reduction in problems.

Professor Cohen told an international conference on healthy ageing that love accounted for the fact that women generally lived longer than men.

"Women are the major carers on the planet it makes sense that women would live longer because they have more love in their lives."

Meanwhile, Cox Newspapers in Atlanta reports on the work of two British researchers who say that increasing the frequency of sexual activity from once a month to at least once a week provides as much happiness as a \$US50,000 pay rise.

FULL STORY AT WWW.FUTUREFOUNDATION.ORG.AU

New power tool for futurists

This week's new release of *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* by Professor Richard Slaughter has been hailed by leading futurists as "one of the most important publishing events in the history of futures studies."

"For many decades to come, these volumes will remain the standard by which all other work is judged," said Wendell Bell, Emeritus Professor, Yale University. Hazel Henderson described the work as indispensable - "not only for the professional futurist but for all those interested in this growing field, whatever their discipline or perspective," while futures graduates at the University of Houston, Clear Lake described it as "the best futures resource available".

Published on CD-ROM, the new release includes all the original volumes of the hard-cover, boxed set of books released in 1996 plus an additional volume prepared with the collaboration of Professor Sohail Inayatullah. Together they represent a powerful tool for the professional futurist, especially those working with organisations who may want to direct client executives to appropriate sections that relate to the focus of their attention at any given time.

The first volume offers an introduction to the field of futures studies, from its origins in the twentieth century and discusses some of the basic concepts and metaphors of the discipline. It reviews the futures literature, and the underpinnings of the academic study of the future. Volume 2 visits some of the global futures organisations; describes basic futures methods and tools; discusses images and imaging processes, and looks at the practice of critical futures, which challenges the embedded assumptions that too often prevent us seeing alternative futures.

The third volume reviews a range of approaches to futures thinking, canvasses the outlook for the new millennium and explores "the long view". It includes a description of Integral Futures, the new approach to futuring developed by Richard Slaughter and colleagues at the Australian Foresight Institute on the foundations of Ken Wilber's Integral Theory. *The Views of Futurists* is the title of Volume 4, which includes essays and articles by futurists from around the world on a host of different topics. In the final volume, Richard Slaughter has assembled an impressive range of material from practising futurists. The whole project comes together with synergies, social innovations, education futures and case studies.

The new release of *The Knowledge Base of Futures Studies* is available from www.foresightinternational.com.au at a price of \$60. Volume discounts are available for corporate purchases.

Homo non so sapiens?

The rate of retreat of Himalayan glaciers is accelerating, says the World Wide Fund for Nature. Mount Kilimanjaro has lost its snow cap for the first time in 11,000 years. Satellite photographs show continuing destruction of the all-important Amazon rainforest. Is it possible that homo sapiens isn't quite so sapiens after all?

But there are encouraging signs of change, in which the "early adopters" of new realities offer excellent models for the followers. For example, in a rare demonstration of large-scale cooperation, the Australian grains industry is proving that, if we apply the wisdom we are named for, we can actually convert big challenges to bigger opportunities instead of just turning our backs on the threats of the immediate future.

So, as other Australians continue to burn coal and sell cars, the grains industry undertook a comprehensive consultation process, included some 200 organisations in creating a shared vision and strategy, and is now moving forward to a sustainable future with higher margins and a bigger share of growth for producers. And its report on the first five years concludes that there is still a potentially bright future for the grains industry.

We reported on its ambitious consultative and visioning processes, under the direction of futurist Colin Benjamin, chief executive of 'Life. Be in it.' in *Future News* (August 2004). Already, grains producers were adopting farming systems that help to lessen the impacts of drought, soil degradation, erosion and other issues as they moved towards sustainable production. They recognised that, even if the Australian government failed to legislate for controls on the emission of greenhouse gases, de-facto controls would be imposed by customers because environmental responsibility "will be a requirement for market access".

Salinity is another key issue for all agricultural industries. The Single Vision strategy notes that "the global loss of arable land through salt contamination is currently 10 million hectares per annum. Increasing urbanisation will impact on land available for farming, particularly in countries like China and India, where rapid urbanisation is occurring in river valleys, where the most valuable farming land is located." It calls for Australia to accelerate its uptake of alternative or advanced farming systems to combat soil related production and productivity losses.

Research for the visioning program projected that the number of grain producers could fall from 33,000 to 10,000 over the next 20 years. To stop or reverse this population decline, the strategy was targeted at increasing the prosperity of grain producers and increasing the value of the grains they produce. At the same time, it recognised that the long term survival of the industry depends on prosperous and sustainable rural and regional communities. "If these communities continue to decline, enormous social and economic pressure will be placed on agricultural industries." As in other areas of production, the competition for talent – in this case, new generations of farmers – will become increasingly difficult.

By offering a strategy to capture a greater share of the grain dollar for producers, the Single Vision program aims to increase the overall level of wealth in regional communities, which in turn will help reverse the decline in regional population. It also addresses issues around the value of land and financing its ownership (the value of farming land is one of the major barriers to people who want to enter the farming industry).

When it comes to the marketplace itself, the strategy presents a set of rational responses to the new realities. Recognising that Australia is a small player in the global grain scene, and very much at the mercy of global patterns in a well-supplied market, it argues that this country has to move away from competing head to head as a producer of bulk, or undifferentiated commodities, to begin producing higher value products. These could be grains with higher intrinsic value for consumers, and technologies that can be

sold into a wider range of markets as well as meeting new and emerging sources of demand.

These new demands might include:

- nutraceuticals and functional foods, to meet the global shift from treating diseases caused by food intake to preventing diseases via diet
- biopharming – molecular farming using transgenic crops to produce therapeutic proteins and industrial enzymes
- bio-materials, integrating plant production and industrial chemistry to produce fuels, biodegradable plastics, textiles, biomaterials for surgery and polymers
- new markets for feed grains

The Single Vision report on the first five years of the program concluded that demand for the higher value new grain technologies would increase dramatically, "representing a major opportunity for the Australian grains sector." However, it emphasised that true success required more than mere logic.

"An industry is not a collection of numbers and units. The grains industry is a human system and people require social as well as economic structures to operate effectively. This is why the Single Vision strategy is as much about rural communities and the regional economy, as it is about emerging demand for new grain technologies and new industry thinking about value chains and farming systems."

That may sound like self-evident wisdom, but it hasn't been easy for environmental policy advisers to ensure that the social dimension is recognised. As we reported in our coverage of Land & Water Australia's futuring program (*Future News* September 2003) the agency's own research told of the isolation and frustration of the people who first tried to bring a social perspective to natural resource management.

"In the 1970s and 1980s, the agencies established to deal with resource depletion in Australia recognised that people were central to both degradation and to sustainable management. Tackling these problems required the assistance of social scientists as well as biophysical scientists," wrote Dr Alice Roughley, who was coordinating the agency's social and institutional research program. "Yet over the past 25 years, Australian natural resource management agencies generally failed to bring social science pioneers into their ranks successfully."

Maybe homo non so sapiens would have been a better name after all?



Signals in the noise

132 US mayors adopt Kyoto Protocol

Last week Michael Bloomberg brought New York City into a coalition of 132 US mayors who have decided to carry out the Kyoto Protocol. He is the latest Republican to join other mayors in a bipartisan coalition to fight global warming on the local level, in an implicit rejection of the administration's policy. The mayors, from cities as liberal as Los Angeles and as conservative as Hurst, Tex., represent nearly 29 million citizens in 35 states. They are pledging to have their cities meet a reduction in heat-trapping gas emissions to levels 7 percent below those of 1990, by 2012.

New York Times 14 05 05

News media or corporate media?...

A storm of discussion about media manipulation is arising in the USA, with the 2005 National Conference on Media now under way in St Louis. In just one example, it took nearly two weeks for the Washington Post to run an article about a secret British intelligence memo that suggests that the Bush administration manipulated intelligence to support its desire to wage war in Iraq, published by Britain's *Sunday Times*. Other media are now focusing on this additional proof that the war in Iraq was illegal.

Media Matters 14 05 05

... or no media (coverage) at all?

The United Nations has again attacked the Howard Government's record on race. But this time the politicians are shutting up and news of the verdict isn't getting out, writes David Marr. Having learned their lesson last time round, silence from Howard, Downer and Ruddock has effectively killed the story. "The strange silence surrounding the latest verdict -- it didn't help that ATSIC was no longer around to coordinate the press campaign -- means there's little political downside for a government choosing to ignore Geneva." *Sydney Morning Herald* 28 03 05

Americans not free of hunger

At least half of all Americans between the ages of 20 and 65 will be forced to use food stamps at some stage in their lives according to a Cornell University professor. More than 85 percent of African Americans will use this emergency resource between the ages of 20 and 65, compared with 37 percent of white Americans; about 64 percent of adults with less than 12 years of education will use food stamps, compared with 38 percent of adults with 12 or more years of education. While the use of food stamps is often brief, about three quarters of people who have used them once will use them again in a different year,

www.cornell.edu

New workplace dynamics and job trends

The workplace of the 21st century is evolving with the persistent impact of the new globalized market and new world order, in an environment of fierce productive competition, changing consumer preferences and multi-cultural influence, increased access to the Internet and other information technologies, wider economic disparities within and between communities, persistent terrorism and violence, and continued anti-globalization activism. Many organizations around the world are responding by creating more part-time jobs, placing higher premiums on competencies with global knowledge, assigning more resources to technology-assisted lifelong learning, and promoting employee adaptability and multi-functionality. The explosion of new knowledge and technology advances in recent years has practically relegated traditional education and training in schools and universities to mere "launching pads" for new workers and entrepreneurs whose careers must now evolve constantly with the help of their employers and peer-driven networked learning.

Presentation by Futures Foundation Chair, Charles Brass, to the International Training Center, San Diego on April 14 2005
Full text at www.futuresfoundation.org.au

Navy judge delivers blow to Bush administration

"I think that the government has successfully proved that any service member has reasonable cause to believe that the wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq were illegal." -- US court-martial.

In a stunning blow to the Bush administration, a Navy judge gave Petty Officer 3rd Class Pablo Paredes no jail time for refusing orders to board the amphibious assault ship Bonhomme Richard before it left San Diego with 3,000 sailors and Marines bound for the Persian Gulf on December 6th. The judge found Pablo guilty of missing his ship's movement by design, but dismissed the charge of unauthorized absence. Although Pablo faced one year in the brig, the judge sentenced him to two months' restriction and three months of hard labor, and reduced his rank to seaman recruit.

Truthout 14 05 05

Windmills improve the view

Wind farms are welcome in David Suzuki's backyard. Even in the stunning ocean-and-mountain view from his beloved island holiday cabin. Tackling the argument that wind farms are a blot on the landscape, he points out that we see beauty through filters shaped by our values and beliefs. "Some people think wind turbines are ugly. I think smokestacks, smog, acid rain, coal-fired power plants and climate change are ugly. I think windmills are beautiful. They harness the power of the wind to supply us with heat and light. They provide local jobs. They help clean our air and reduce climate change."

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