



future news

A newsletter from the *futures* foundation Vol. 11 No. 5 November 2006

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Big rise in interest needed to improve Oz futures

Australia will lose countless opportunities for more productive, healthy and harmonious futures unless it begins to show more interest in exploring the future, says Paul Wildman, chairman of the Australasian node of the worldwide Millennium Project. He was launching the Project's 2006 State of the Future Report for the Futures Foundation, which hosts the project in Australia.

Dr Wildman cited missed opportunities to address the water crisis in south east Queensland since the State of the Future Report began highlighting water as a critical global issue ten years ago. "Even after the water crisis had been recognised and publicised internationally, construction of new dams was cancelled, tanks were declared in breach of local bylaws, and single use water systems were entrenched," he told his audience in Brisbane.

The Millennium Project is a unique global thinktank. Its 2006 *State of the Future Report* has 125 pages of summary plus 5,400 pages on CD. According to Jan Lee Martin, co-chair of the node, it distils the collective intelligence of more than 2,000 leading scientists, futurists, scholars and policy advisers who work for governments, corporations, NGOs, universities and other organizations.

Copies of the Report are available from the Futures Foundation for \$75 (\$50 for members). Requests can be emailed to Charles Brass at cab@fowf.com.au.



Paul Wildman

"CHANGE OR BE CHANGED BY NATURE"

If human society doesn't change itself, nature will make the changes it needs says the Millennium Project's 2006 State of the Future Report. "It is increasingly passé and ignorant to think that humanity has to choose between economic growth and environmental protection.

"Carbon dioxide levels are now greater than at any time in the last 650,000 years; the surface temperature of Earth has been warmer over the past several decades than during any comparable period in at least 400 years; six of the last eight years were the hottest on record; the Gulf Stream heating effect for Europe has been reduced by 30%, due in part to overlying fresh water from melting glaciers; and the melting tundra is releasing methane, which is 22 times more powerful than CO² in terms of climate change.

"Income gaps are widening within 53 countries representing 80% of humanity. About 2.5 bn people (40% of the world) live on \$2 or less per day. Traded economic growth could become a disaster for poorer countries that will not be able to compete against the growing high-tech, low-wage industrial capacities of China and India."

The State of the Future Report concludes that "business as usual will lead to

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www.futuresfoundation.org.au

disasters ranging from massive environmental and economic failures to large-scale migrations and increasing rage against what is perceived to be injustice and inequities.

"There is a growing hunger around the world to do what is right for our common future, but effective leadership, with details for action, is missing."

www.stateofthefuture.org



WHAT ARE THE WORLD'S TOP 15 CHALLENGES?



Following are the top 15 global challenges identified by the Millennium Project, and described in detail in the 2006 State of the Future Report.

1. How can sustainable development be achieved for all?
2. How can everyone have sufficient clean water without conflict?
3. How can population growth and resources be brought into balance?
4. How can genuine democracy emerge from authoritarian regimes?
5. How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long-term perspectives?
6. How can the global convergence of information and communications technologies work for everyone?
7. How can ethical market economies be encouraged to help reduce the gap between rich and poor?
8. How can the threat of new and re-emerging diseases and immune microorganisms be reduced?
9. How can the capacity to decide be improved as the nature of work and institutions changes?
10. How can shared values and new security strategies reduce ethnic conflicts, terrorism, and the use of weapons of mass destruction?
11. How can the changing status of women help improve the human condition?
12. How can transnational organized crime networks be stopped from becoming more powerful and sophisticated global enterprises?
13. How can growing energy demand be met safely and efficiently?
14. How can scientific and technological breakthroughs be accelerated to improve the human condition?
15. How can ethical considerations become more routinely incorporated into global decisions?

www.stateofthefuture.org

Future leaders address global challenges

The Mexican node of the Millennium Project is offering prizes to high school students around the world for the best responses to the 15 Global Challenges: www.globalmillenniumprize.org/intro/p.html

The Sustainability Tipping Point: will we seize the opportunity or fudge it?

We are about to experience the convergence of three of the great issues confronting humanity. Climate change, the peaking of oil supply and water shortage are coming together in a manner which will profoundly alter our way of life, our institutions and our ability to prosper on this planet. Each one is a major issue in its own right, but their convergence has received minimal attention, which is unfortunate as it is likely to have far greater impact than the sum of the individual parts. It is time to join the dots and consider how well prepared we are to handle this challenge.

Population as ever is the main driver. In the 60 years since WW2, world population has grown at an unprecedented rate from 2.5 billion to 6.5 billion today and even with declining birthrates, a world population of 9 billion is forecast by 2050. That

"It is time to join the dots..."

growth triggered an insatiable demand for natural resources, notably water, oil and other fossil fuels. For example, oil production over this period grew from 2.5 to 30 billion barrels annually, the bulk being consumed by the one billion of us fortunate enough to live in the developed world. One result of this increase in fossil fuel consumption is almost certainly the climate change we are experiencing today, which in turn is exacerbating water shortage in many areas.

The thought that exponential economic growth in a finite world might hit some physical limits is not new; we have experienced limits at a local level, but so far we have either side-stepped the issue or been able to find short-term solutions, in the process becoming overly confident that any global limits could be similarly circumvented.

Today, just as the bulk of the world's population is about to step on to the growth escalator which we have been ascending for the last 60 years, we discover that there are global limits which are both real and imminent. The weight of scientific evidence increasingly points to the fact that the globe cannot support its current human population, let alone an additional 2.5 billion, unless we radically change our way of life and concepts of economic growth.....

Full text of this story, which was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 16 10 06, is at www.futuresfoundation.org.au.



Ian Dunlop

Australia in 2025: A Happy Scenario

by Peter Saul



The President of the Republic of Australia has just announced the date of the 2026 election. As was the case in the last two elections, the policy platform of all major political parties outlines their particular approach to making Australia more "authentically happy". This term had been defined more than two decades ago by Dr Martin Seligman as describing the

state of using one's unique talents and strengths in the service of others.

After a decade of global crisis (see historical background), the Liberal, Labor and Green parties are once again fighting the election on their different platforms for promoting a society where "progress" and "success" are defined in terms of human happiness, social harmony and wellbeing rather than GDP, median incomes and stockmarket indices. These traditional economic indicators have now become of secondary importance, providing they are above the threshold levels agreed several years ago by all major parties at a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament.

In the election campaign, we can again expect much bi-partisan support for.....

(more at website)

Australia 2026 - the conscious country: Australia joins the awakening of the world

by Barbara Bok

A young Australian's vision of a safe and conscious Australia merges with the World Wisdom Council's vision of global peace and a new dimension of consciousness.

Three self and mutually reinforcing waves were needed, each wave becoming visible during the following phases:

- 2006 - 2012 Increased transparency
- 2010 - 2020 Different work purpose
- 2015 onward New humanity program.

The story of the main factors contributing to the establishment of the three waves begins with the weight of a finite world....and a generational handover of leadership. Values shifts continue to push transparency. New, feminine leadership marked a break from past leadership styles....visions of a safe world and a common humanity led the way into the future..... (work in progress)

Australia 2026: a post Howard-Costello scenario

by Sohail Inayatullah



It has been almost twelve years since the Howard-Costello run was dramatically defeated. Australians, while enjoying economic rise, tired of the social and environmental divide that followed. The Liberal Party had been great at economic growth within the industrial paradigm but the digital era demanded far more flexibility and creativity than a 1950s childhood could give leaders.

Since the new leadership – a coalition of New Labor, Green and recently created political parties – there have been dramatic changes. There have been visible changes, changes one can see while walking around in cities, others have been systemic changes, but the major shift has been one of worldview – from the politics of fear and exclusion to the ethics of inclusion and a version of sustainability.

Also the story Australians told about themselves had changed – it was not about "children overboard" or "interest rate hikes" but about the confident but ethical Aussie, certainly punching above one's weight but not boasting about it. On the contrary, more and more Aussies took a personal pride in quietly working with other cultures to meet the global challenges.

Of course, the obvious happened. Australia signed Kyoto, the Prime Minister apologised to indigenous communities, a republic was created. And the first Australian president was aboriginal, providing (as with Nelson Mandela in South Africa), moral leadership and direction. (more at website)

Heroes of the Age of Light

by Jan Lee Martin

Welcome back to the second session on 21st century terrestrial civilization, in which we continue to explore the decay and renaissance of so-called western societies between the industrial age and the Age of Light.

In particular we look at the leadership role of Oztralia, a southern culture from what was then called the "New World". Following the feedback loops to their point of origin in the social and political chaos of the 2020s, we will also meet some of the heroes of that renaissance. In fact, let's begin with the person who is now given credit for opening the door to the new age of global leadership for Oztralia, a 22-year-old woman who.....

(work in progress)



ausforesight2006

AusForesight2006: a taste of the future?

by **Tim Longhurst**

High energy and productive interaction were dominant features of the AusForesight conference in Melbourne in October, when the extended Australian foresight community came together over two days of total immersion in the future at Swinburne University in Melbourne.

AusForesight2006 was a unique event. It was one of the few forums anywhere in the world specifically aimed at bringing together foresight practitioners to share their experiences, learn from each other and help foster the development of the foresight field. In Australia, it was the first meeting of this type since the Futures Foundation's *Conversations with the Future*, held at Macquarie University in Sydney in January 2000.

Highlights of AusForesight2006 included

- an opening address by Elaine Henry, chief executive officer of The Smith Family (full text at www.futuresfoundation.org.au)
- a lively exploration of the outside world's perception of futures, futurists and futuring from young futurists Gretchen Young and Steve McGrail,
- an informal panel session with some of our most distinguished futures professionals and academics
- a "world tour" of futures, exploring how various approaches to futures work are applied in different cultural settings
- a participative experience of major civilisational cycles, in "The Sarkar Game"
- a public session, at which Richard Neville combined wit and perception to map key changes around the world, and
- a hilarious dinner in an excellent Chinese restaurant, with tables competing in the telling of outrageously tall tales about the future.

But perhaps the outstanding achievement of the event was the extent to which it underscored the rapid growth in the futuring community, and the energy and diversity that animate it.

Presenters and participants have been invited to continue the conversation at <http://visioncafe.wordpress.com/>

Details of Swinburne University's postgraduate programs in Strategic Foresight can be found at swinburne.edu.au/coursefinder.

Waldzell Dialog 2006: aspiration to inspiration

by **Jan Lee Martin**

Take a massive 900-year-old abbey; add two bestselling authors of spiritual books; season with a Nobel laureate in medicine, a famous medical scientist and two "wrap artists"; and throw in a handful of young change-makers. It all adds up to the glamour event of the season in the world of spirituality and change: the Waldzell Meeting 2006: *A Global Dialog for Inspiration*.

The invitation was irresistible. Chaired by Fast Company founder Alan Webber, session topics ranged from the identification of restriction enzymes for genetic engineering to business leadership, and back again. Official topic was change and the role of the individual: can the individual change the world? Given that several participants had already done so, the answer may seem self-evident. However, the final consensus positioned the change-maker more modestly as the individual who starts the process of change – the one who initiates the group, begins the network, starts the ball rolling.

Highlight of the weekend was undoubtedly the series of brief presentations made by young Architects of the Future (see page 4).

Keynote speaker, Robert Gallo, who is credited with discovering the HIV virus, explained the work of his Foundation in fighting AIDS, while Werner Arber, who won the Nobel Prize in medicine for his work with gene-splicing, discussed the role of genetic engineering. Popular stars of the show were authors Isabelle Allende and Paulo Coelho, and "wrap artists" Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

The Waldzell Dialog 2006 must be seen as a big success for the growing community of citizens seeking positive change and a renewed recognition of spirituality in the world. Most participants would have returned to work inspired by the weekend's program, which is exactly what it set out to achieve. But would they have returned with deep new understandings and new tools for change? As a futurist, I was disappointed by the program's apparent innocence of the powerful ideas and tools of futures studies – and that's a failure we must lay at our own door as a failure of our own field to make itself more widely known.

This topic was addressed by AusForesight, a very different kind of conference for the futuring community held in Melbourne in October, and the conversation will continue (see opposite)

For more information on the Waldzell Dialog, visit www.waldzell.org



Young Architects of the Future

Can an individual change the world? The short answer agreed by participants at the Waldzell Dialogue in Melk this year was "yes" -- by simply starting a new snowball. And there was ample evidence to reinforce this conclusion from the examples of a dozen young Architects of the Future, who have started new projects as diverse as the reconstruction of Bosnia, training midwives in Malawi and helping Indian children to dream...

Education as a vaccine against AIDS

Nearly one in five Nigerians are being infected with HIV in the country's worst-affected areas. The national rate is now 5.8%. It's a problem many leaders find overwhelming... just too big to tackle... But it hasn't overwhelmed Fadekemi Akinfaderin. This 27-year-old co-founded EVA Nigeria, a non-government organisation based on the premise that education is the key to effective preventive strategies.

www.evanigeria.org



80,000 good reasons to bike

A young Austrian on a bicycle demonstrated one way to change the world when he travelled from India to Switzerland -- through seven countries on two continents -- to raise money for people suffering from leprosy. His solo Bike for Help project was aimed at raising awareness as well as money for leprosy sufferers in Asia. And he did both: after 9,000 km Christoph von Toggenburg contributed E80,000 for leprosy sufferers in India and Cambodia.

www.bikeforhelp.com



What will East Timor look like in 2050?

"Over 30 years of conflict have traumatised the population and shredded the social fabric of East Timor," says Danilo Afonso-Henriques. The country will only be able to envision a 'new future' and a 'new story' when its leaders cultivate their capacity to work together and create a new vision. So he is asking 35 leaders from different organisations, sectors and factions to do just that, using the Mont Fleur approach that was so successful in South Africa.

After the headlines in Bosnia...

"As the atrocities of war disappeared from the news headlines, the fate of the people in the former Yugoslavia received less attention from the public and the media," reported Felix Dreszewski, 28. It became much more difficult to motivate students to support young people in the Balkans. Yet the situation remains desperate. Young volunteers from Germany are now building on an earlier, very successful, student program, helping their young neighbours to identify problems and solutions.

www.schueler-helfen-leben.de

Pakistan National Youth Service

People under 30 make up 70% of Pakistan's population, yet very little is done to harness their potential, says Ali Raza Khan, whose project addresses this issue. Instead, they are encouraged to take on adult responsibilities, such as employment or raising a family. They suffer "not only the economic realities of poverty, but also the psychological implications... they turn to a culture of guns, drugs and violence."

www.ashoka.org/fellows/viewprof

Saving the forgotten and dispossessed

Sasha Chanoff's project, Mapendo International, seeks to identify, rescue and protect people fleeing conflict and violence in Africa. Top of its list are people whose lives are in imminent danger, and who fall outside existing relief efforts -- refugees who are targets of genocide, torture survivors, rape victims, widows, orphans and those with urgent medical needs, including HIV.

www.mapendo.org

SHIFT - The Global Leadership Lab

"The next generation of young global leaders is uniquely positioned to transform the culture of leadership worldwide," says 33-year-old Laurent S. Labouremne of Melbourne. "Yet they remain an under-served and under-utilised resource..."

His SHIFT Foundation brings together a team of "some of the world's most provocative thinkers... who share the vision to cultivate a new generation of leaders."

www.shiffoundation.org



A chance to live in Malawi

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. Most of the population lives on less than one Euro a day. Infant mortality is about 10 per cent; the HIV rate is around 20 per cent and rising. That's why Niels Beisinghoff of Germany decided to set another snowball rolling. His project trains traditional birth attendants in rural Malawi with the aim of reducing the number of stillborn children and maternal mortality.

www.lebenschancen.org



Dream a dream in India

"Dream a Dream was born as an organisation committed to protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of children from vulnerable communities by empowering them to dream big and work towards their aspirations," says Vichal Talreja of India. His team works with other organisations, providing a wide range of creative and other programs in "non-obtrusive, not-threatening, fun-filled environments."

www.dreamdream.org

Signals in the noise....

Lining up to enrich uranium

Never underestimate the potential for erratic policy when economic and political interests collide, even when the policy involves preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. This happened last month when, in rapid succession, Argentina, Australia and South Africa joined a growing list of countries interested in enriching uranium for commercial purposes. That is the same activity that Iran claims as its inalienable right, and that the United States, the European Union, Russia and China insist must be halted in the interests of non-proliferation.

International Herald Tribune

13 09 06

UK supermarkets show green calling cards

Since Sir Terry Leahy, chief executive of Tesco, jumped on the green bandwagon with his 'community plan' this year, the chains have been falling over themselves to show their environmental calling cards. Is it, as some environmentalists claim, all 'greenwash' or are the supermarket chains genuinely trying to build 'sustainable' businesses? Helen Burley of Friends of the Earth says they have been critical of Tesco "because what they are doing is tinkering around the edges". But she praises Asda's initiative to set up local delivery hubs for local produce. "If that was rolled out nationwide that would be a fundamental change in the way they do business," she says.

Financial Times UK

23 09 06

In Armenia, drivers go green from necessity

Armenia is blazing a trail in the global quest to move to cleaner fuels -- not by choice, but out of necessity due to its unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan. The tiny country of three million people in the Caucasus mountains has a strong claim to be a world leader in running vehicles on liquefied petroleum gas -- also called autogas -- a fuel that produces fewer harmful greenhouse gases than gasoline or diesel.

The Moscow Times

18 08 06

Conservation: the new energy industry

"A 5% reduction in global energy use would be enough to power Australia, Mexico and the entire UK. So what are we waiting for?" These two sentences are given an entire broadsheet page to themselves in a two-page advertisement from Chevron Energy. Is this corporate social responsibility writ large?

International Herald Tribune

31 08 06

10m people a year affected by zoonotic viruses

Doctors and veterinarians need to work together to tackle the increasing global threat of zoonotic viral diseases spread by non-human vertebrate hosts - including dogs, cattle, chickens and mosquitoes. An estimated 50 million people acquired zoonotic diseases between 2000 and 2005 and up to 78,000 have died, reports Dr Jonathan Heeney, Chair of the Department of Virology at the Biomedical Primate Research Centre in the Netherlands.

Journal of Internal Medicine

November 06

Flying at 23,000 km per hour on bio-kerosene

The US Air Force wants to become independent of imported oil and is planning to use German technology to convert wood, coal and wheat into diesel kerosene to fuel new fighter aircraft. According to this report, the hypersonic technology vehicle (HTV-1) now under development at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio is scheduled for its first test flight at the end of 2007 and by about 2010 is expected to break all records with a speed of Mach 22 (23,364 kph). The technology, developed in 1925, could convert available coal resources of the USA into 2.5bn litres of fuel.

Die Presse, Austria

15 09 06

Growth in carbon emissions "out of control"

The growth in global emissions of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels over the past five years was four times greater than for the preceding ten years, according to a recent study. Global rate was 3.2% in the five years to 2005 compared with 0.8 per cent from 1990-1999, despite efforts to reduce carbon pollution through the Kyoto agreement.

Independent/UK

11 11 06

Futures thinking for social foresight

A powerful resource for teachers and students, this new book offers a practical overview of futures studies, with the long-term goal of creating social foresight. Five user-friendly sections are enhanced with 'reflections', as well as informative graphics to illustrate critical issues.

Authors Richard Slaughter and Marcus Bussey offer impeccable futures credentials as well as outstanding expertise in education and learning.

Copies are available from www.foresightinternational.com.au.

