



future news

A newsletter from the *futures* foundation

Vol. 11 No. 4 September 2006

Help create better futures
for our children and theirs
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Birth of the *futures* foundation

February 1996

Australia's leading futurists are establishing a national consulting network as the first step toward setting up a Futures Foundation. The network offers organisations a single point of access to a range of specialist consulting services...

March 1996

Challenging some of our most basic cultural assumptions is the job of the futurist according to Tony Stevenson. "This is just one of many ways that futures professionals are able to help organisations equip themselves to make the most of future opportunities and to minimise future risks..."

July 1996

The futurists network is completing the embryonic stage of its development, with establishment of the Futures Foundation as a legal entity...

March 1997

Futures: the heroic journey for the 21st century. Matt Handbury of Murdoch Magazines...launched the Futures Foundation on March 3, telling a personal story that showed his own integration of self, life and work...Other speakers talked of futures studies and the role of futures in working towards environmental and social sustainability...

April 1997

Foresight is child's play: why don't we use it?... The capacity to use futures thinking, or foresight, is born in every child yet we seem unable to use it successfully at a social level in Australia, said Dr Richard Slaughter, director of the Future Studies Centre...

BEST OF FUTURE NEWS 1996-2006:

Dancing with the future

Today is what happened to yesterday. As futurists, did we anticipate it?

See for yourself. This special birthday collection includes highlights from ten years of *Future News*. From these, and all the other stories at our website, you can easily make your own assessment of the value of exploring the future.

For example it's hard, now, to remember a time when corporate social responsibility was not a big issue for organisations. When we carried a story on it in 1997, the concept was still new to others. To us, its inevitable journey to the centre of attention for organisations was indicated by a coherent pattern of signals, from growing activism and consumerism to increasing ethical investment and the competition for top talent.

Other emergent themes included the growing impor-

tance of sustainability; new approaches to food and farming; changing ideas of health and happiness. And then there's the growing challenge to old ideas of success. What do we think "success" really is? How do we measure and report it, as organisations or communities? What about individuals: does success mean happiness? Exactly what is that?

The core concepts of futuring itself have a very long shelf life. But we have also reported significant evolutionary events like the introduction of Causal Layered Analysis and Integral Futures. And we confidently anticipate that organisations will benefit more and more from use of these tools. *Leading* organisations, that is -- and our ideas of leadership are changing, too.

Reading and interpreting changes like this is all in a day's work for futurists. It includes checking mindsets, scanning contexts, looking at the inner as well as the outer, challenging assumptions and imagining better outcomes.

As we continue our own journey of change, under the able chairmanship of Charles Brass, maybe this is a good time to say thank you to members and volunteers. I'd also like to salute those members of the media who are beginning to hear the music, and to share its message.

On with the dance.... *Jan Lee Martin*

HEARING THE MUSIC

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for full stories click through *here* to
www.futuresfoundation.org.au

SUSTAINABILITY IS ATTAINABLE

November 1997

Sustainability is attainable: new corporate futures

"Given the political will we could reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Australia by at least 50 per cent in one generation," Professor Mark Diesendorf, director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures, told the Futures Foundation. "We have almost all the technologies now to create a sustainable energy system. Some of them are cost-effective now, some are close to it, some can be soon. It is not obvious that it would cost us more to cut our greenhouse emissions by as much as that."

1997

Professor Diesendorf is critical of the data on which the Federal government bases its current policy, noting that research methodologies were flawed, and that key studies were funded by the coal industry. However in this session he focussed on the opportunities for organisations...

September 2002: HOW NOW, BROWN CLOUD?

How many more environmental catastrophes will it take to bring some world leaders out of their state of denial about human impacts on the planet's ecology? And can the general news media help to accelerate the process? Asia's brown cloud, Europe's floods, Africa's famines, America's fires..... these and other environmental disasters are all being treated as separate news events. Yet anyone who has been monitoring global environmental conditions knows that all of them are typical of the phenomena that scientists predicted long ago would be a visible result of global warming...

2002

March 2006 Stealing from the future

Parents in today's western societies are cheating their children by funding their own lifestyles from the future, says Ian Lowe, president of the Australian Conservation Foundation. In a powerful presentation to an international audience in Taiwan, Professor Lowe emphasised that the future is not somewhere we are going, but something we are creating.

"There are many possible futures. We should be trying to establish a future that can be sustained. Not doing that is selling short our children by funding our lifestyles from the future." Professor Lowe set out to describe how one might go about destroying a planet.

"How could we do it? We could start with exponential population growth. Then we could increase the rate of consumption per person. We could base our economy on consumption, stimulating unnecessary consumption.

"We could deplete significant mineral resources, starting with oil, and over-use potentially renewable resources like fisheries and forests and groundwater.

"And we could disrupt the global climate..."

2006

Pathways to sustainability...

1997

The crisis of non-sustainability can be related to a duality in the western contemporary worldview which has polarised knowledge and value, and through reductionism has reduced diversity and complexity, according to Dr Vandana Shiva of New Delhi, in a keynote presentation to the UN conference in Newcastle. "We need to review the past 500 years and stand it on its head..."

"Modern Europe was founded on the enclosure of the Commons and destruction of community and the rights of community...commoners were excluded through the new definition of 'property'..."

The notion of wealth also called for critical examination, he said. "Global production is just 1/60th of the US\$1 trillion being circulated daily. The explosion of money is a greater threat than the explosion of population. Corporations which appropriate value are seen to have created value. Cities lament their departure as if it were they who have supported the city and generated the community, even though it was the community that supported the businesses and commerce and gave them permission to access the water, the land and the labour of the people that in turn has given rise to the social wealth now declared private wealth.

"The appropriation by corporations of biodiversity and knowledge that indigenous people have nurtured and protected has been described as 'biopiracy'. We are witnessing the continued enclosure of the commons. Its recovery is an essential aspect of achieving sustainability..."

[click here for full stories](#)

2002

Hidden leaders....

February 2002

Today's real leaders are invisible because the old-paradigm lenses of media and the establishment prevent them from being seen, says Karl-Henrik Robert. But they're there - more and more of them. And one day soon there will be enough new-paradigm lenses in media and establishment to recognise that fact and to begin the adoption into mainstream society of the new paradigm we need so much.

Dr Robert, founder of the global organisation, The Natural Step, presented the annual Jack Beale lecture at the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of New South Wales at the end of 2001. After describing the Natural Step organisation and the way it was created -- through finding areas of agreement rather than being trapped in debate about disagreements -- he took a wider view of the world, its problems and its progress...

Will the big dry make us wetter?

Could the global water crisis be the catalyst for a shift towards more futures thinking in public policy? Might the political dries, who have so long resisted worldviews other than economic rationalism, finally move out of denial under the pressure of physical reality? At last there are some signs that this is beginning to happen.

More than five million people die each year from water-related diseases. Three million of them are children under the age of five. Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, twice the rate of population growth. A westerner uses as much water just flushing a toilet as someone in a traditional culture would use to wash, cook, clean and drink each day.

Imagine the reaction of future generations when they learn that people in our time actually washed their cars (their *what?*) with drinking water. Even sprayed it over the land. And that as late as the 21st century, toxins from cities, factories and farms were still being allowed to pollute fresh water supplies.

As the long-anticipated water crisis bites, perhaps it's not surprising to find that one early adopter of futures thinking in public policy is Land & Water Australia... And the good news is that they are not only asking what they need to know about factors directly affecting the physical environment, but are also working to identify key influences in the social and institutional environment...

2003



April 2000

Success, lies and sustainability

2000

Major corporations around the world are finding hidden value in simple shifts of perception. And that's good news for everyone - including the Futures Foundation, which has long argued that reframing perceptions and exploring invisibles will be one of the most powerful ways for organisations to add value in the future.

What's exciting about the performance measurement revolution? For a start, its sheer size and complexity is amazing for those who are just tuning in to this global wave of change in the way we measure and report the performance of organisations - and that includes leaders and managers whose attention has been distracted by more pressing needs.

But what makes this area one of the hottest hotspots of change for organisations of all kinds today is the powerful impact that performance measurement has on organisational behaviour.

When we change the way we measure success we change our essential ideas of what we mean by success - a reframing that has become increasingly necessary during the materialist 20th century. It has been urged by scientists and activists over the past few decades. Now, these same experts and activists are working with major corporations to develop new sets of indicators that measure performance in different ways...

[click here for full stories](#)

October 2004

Of food and farming

Something is badly wrong with the way we feed ourselves, agreed experts from all parts of the food industry at a conference held in London in July. Some highlights:

- A growing consensus that people in industrialised nations are overdosing on sugars, fats and salt, leading to obesity, cardiovascular disease and premature death. People in many developing countries are following suit
- Already, ten per cent of Europe's health costs go on obesity.
- While governments ask people to listen to health education, other policies point the opposite way ("the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, for example, pays farmers to churn out fats")
- The food industry would sign up to sustained public education on the benefits of healthy eating... but the public don't seem to take any notice: one researcher has found that even when people accept advice on what they should eat, they don't act on it. "Palatability, convenience and price tend to overwhelm healthy eating decisions..."

October 2004

If we are what we eat.....

2004

Food allergies now cause up to 20 deaths a year in Australia, frequently children, and frequently from the growing incidence of allergy to peanuts. These fatalities are the tragic tip of a vast iceberg of physical and emotional health problems that is only now being linked with the mass production of food. Meanwhile, the food industry rushes ahead with aggressive treatments designed to extend shelf-life, cut manufacturing costs and appeal to our senses.

The DuPont Food company is even planning to use nanotechnology (see *Future News* June) to assemble food from carbon, hydrogen and oxygen atoms present in the air as water and carbon dioxide. Why bother with plants and animals, they say, if they can simply replicate their atomic structures? Kraft is also looking at nanotechnology, and working actively to bring its products to market. Yet as the CSIRO's Dr Terry Turney told a recent Sydney workshop, "We need to recognise that carbon nanotubes can breach the blood/brain barrier..."

Health bots and human care futures

July 2001

Health bots and the rights of robots

Will health-bots monitor your caloric intake, warning you when you've eaten too much or not exercised enough? Will a strategically placed health-bot make the toilet smart, giving instant feedback on potential diseases brewing?

Will we use up-to-the-minute information to create the world we want, purchasing health and other products that match the futures we want to create? For example, will values-oriented consumers buy only products that follow ethical guidelines focused on people (social justice, women's and labour rights); planet (environment, and future generations); and acceptable profits? And as robots like this get smarter, as artificial intelligence develops, will robots gain legal rights? Who will represent them? What type of world will result as we merge with new information and genetic technologies?

These were just some of the provocative questions raised by Professor Sohail Inayatullah when he spoke to journalists at a Science Forum on artificial intelligence...

"As the web and artificial intelligence develop,

"This is the health professional on a wrist"

we can anticipate health-bots or health coaches, that is, always-on wearable computers," he said. "They will provide individualised and immediate feedback, letting us know for example our caloric intake or the amount of exercise needed to burn off the pizza we just ate.

"They will also let us know the make-up of each product we are considering purchasing, helping us to identify allergies, for example.

"This is the health professional on a wrist..."

2001

July 2001

Robots for doing, humans for caring

Marginal and incremental change is a betrayal of the future, argues Professor Peter Baume, a director of the Futures Foundation. In a paper exploring alternative futures of health, he speculates about the future role of robots, and asks how health systems might be designed to serve the population instead of the service providers.



"An old medical cartoon shows a cliff over which people fall," he said. "It is possible to put a fence at the top of the cliff to stop people falling (equivalent to prevention) or to put a fleet of ambulances at the bottom (equivalent to our present care system).

When we consider illness - often called "health" in some inversion of reality - when we consider those who have fallen over the cliff, we find great new possibilities."

We need a 'greenfield' view of health, the professor said.

"After all, the future is going to be different. Nothing can be ruled out from the beginning..."



March 2003

The intelligent heart

It's official. The heart has a mind of its own.

In a Cinderella story that is winning the interest of corporate America, medical research is transforming traditional ideas of the heart as a servant of the brain. Instead, it repositions the organ as an independent benefactor of health and psychological wellbeing. In the work environment, understanding the way it works can increase productivity.

The Institute of HeartMath in California is exploring the physiological mechanisms by which the heart communicates with the brain, influencing information processing, perceptions, emotions and health. The non profit Institute has also developed training tools for individuals from school age to help them manage their "inner quality".

"We are asking questions such as: Why do people experience the feeling or sensation of love and other positive emotional states in the area of the heart and what are the physiological ramifications of these emotions?"

"How do stress and different emotional states affect the autonomic nervous system, hormonal and immune systems, the heart and brain?"

"It became clear that negative emotions lead to increased disorder in the heart's rhythms and in the autonomic nervous system, thereby adversely affecting the rest of the body. In contrast, positive emotions create increased harmony and coherence in heart rhythms and improve balance in the nervous system.

"The health implications are easy to understand: disharmony in the nervous system leads to inefficiency and increased stress on the heart and other organs while harmonious rhythms are more efficient and less stressful to the body's systems.

"More intriguing are the dramatic positive changes that occur when techniques are applied that increase coherence in rhythmic patterns of heart rate variability..."

2003

[click here for full stories](#)

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

April 2003

A happier, post-material future?

September 1997

Consumer society and the meaning of life

A powerful article from founder member, Richard Neville changed the tempo of conversations around Sydney when it was published...

Conservationist Vincent Serventy was one of the first to weigh in with congratulations. He told *Future News* that he thought the article an excellent and timely "call to arms"... Richard himself reports the good news that more than 100 of the many congratulatory messages came from corporate executives who were themselves aware of and concerned by the implications of our growing focus on consumerism and marketing.

Quotable quotes: "Shopping options multiply while lifestyle choices diminish..."

"When we possess something of real value - doors unlocked at night, laughter in the playground - we are asked to name its price... (It's better to turn on the air-conditioning, for the health of our GDP, than to open a window)..."

[click here for full stories](#)

When the Downing Street Strategy Unit of the British government starts holding seminars on life satisfaction, the subject of happiness has moved into the political mainstream, reports Ben Hunt of the UK Futurists Network. Regular readers of *Future News* will know also that it has been a feature of the futures discourse for many years, often as part of our consideration of what we consider to be success in life, and how we measure it.

Ben Hunt reports research that says we are no happier than previous generations, and at worst, we are actually becoming more miserable. He says commentators are urging governments to formulate new policies to increase citizens' happiness and argues that this new concern has put 19th century utilitarianism - with happiness used as a measure of progress - back on the political agenda.

"Despite our increased average material wealth and consumption, we are not feeling better. This is the 'Easterlin Paradox', the idea that as we get richer, we get no happier - named after US economist Richard Easterlin following a study in the early 1970s.

"For many - including psychologists, economists, environmentalists and policy makers - happiness and economic growth are incompatible.

The more we grow our economies, have more money and consume more things, the less happy we are likely to be. As a result, governments should de-prioritise economic growth, they say, and focus more on trying to improve how we feel about life - our levels of satisfaction and subjective well-being...

2003

June 2003

GROWTH FETISH

For the first time in human history we have the opportunity to live authentic lives, free of preoccupation with the basic needs of survival, writes Clive Hamilton in his recent book, *Growth Fetish*. Yet just as it becomes possible to take the hero's journey of personal growth without demanding heroics, we are allowing ourselves to be seduced by the trivial indulgences of consumer society.

"Most of us are now freed from the daily need to put food on the table and worry about economic security, because the fact is that most people in rich countries are very wealthy by any standard, Dr Hamilton told *Future News*.

"Constraints of social class, gender and race have largely fallen away, and we have the opportunity for the first time to find our authentic identities -- to live out who we are rather than responding to the dictates of society and the economy. And yet just as this opportunity emerged in recent decades, the marketers stepped in and started manufacturing identities for us.

"My book is about imagining a post growth society in which we cast off our obsession with material consumption and try, each of us, to find what our lives are meant to be about..."



October 2003

The pursuit of happiness

2003

It is the subject of countless treatises and self-help books. In the US, the quest for it is an inalienable right enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. Now, investigating it has become an academic discipline, says the *New Scientist* (4/10/03). It looks at the new science of how to be happy, asking where or how we are supposed to find happiness?

"Through good works and helping people, perhaps, or by finding religion or discovering the joys of 'downshifting'?"

Whatever strategy you choose, it helps if you live in Puerto Rico or Denmark, the journal says. (Australia ranked 20th in the World Values Survey, though it performed better for day-to-day happiness.)

"Over the past decade, the study of happiness... has morphed into a bona fide discipline. You can find 'professors of happiness' at leading universities, 'quality of life' institutes the world over, and thousands of research papers."

Regular readers of *Future News* will know this kind of peak performance has been one of our consistent themes, informed lately by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Professor of Psychology at the Peter F. Drucker School of Management....

Listening to the living future

By 2025, there'll be a new generation of people managing Australia's affairs. Where are they now? In high school or in the difficult transition stage between formal education and wider society. What is the current generation doing to help them prepare for the toughest tasks of leadership and citizenship Australia has ever faced? Or even talk with them about it? Not nearly enough.

Tidal waves of change are on their way. Demographic change, social change, technological change, and deep changes in the way we think and the way we are. While the current generation inches from denial to groping engagement with these issues, the next generation knows it will be in the hot seat and is either deeply worried or distracting itself from the need for engagement.

Yet when young people are given the tools of futures methodologies, they respond positively and prove themselves able to cope at levels unanticipated by their elders, as a few pioneering programs are beginning to show...

[click here for full stories](#)

Jigsaw links young people to the future

2001

A group of high school students on the Central Coast of New South Wales has created an inspiring vision for the future of their community and is now challenging community leaders to help make it happen. On the way, they piloted a futuring process that combines appreciative inquiry and scenario development with the respected Oregon model for community visioning.

About one third of the 300,000 population of the Central Coast is less than 25 years of age. Population is increasing twice as fast as NSW generally; growth in the youth population has been around 18 times higher than for NSW; and the unemployment rate is continually two to three per cent above the State average.

The Jigsaw committee was established to link the work of government, Council and non-government organisations in addressing the issues that arise from these and other difficult demographics. As part of a strategy aimed at improving the wellbeing of young people on the Central Coast, Jigsaw invited a group of students to participate in this process with the Futures Foundation...

YOUTH AT THE CENTRE

A new national program, aimed at giving young people reason to stay in rural Australia, is helping students to identify local community needs and opportunities as the first step towards developing enterprises that meet these needs.

The Youth at the Centre program also provides tools and program support for young men and women who have left school, to help them engage more fully in the life of their local community.

The program is an initiative of the Bank of IDEAS in Western Australia, which accepts that, as life in rural Australia changes, many traditional employment opportunities have disappeared. However it sees new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities with improved communications, lifestyle preference changes and increased rural tourism.

In contrast the education system generally continues to prepare young people to work for others and to encourage them to leave rural Australia in search of employment...

Learning for the future

Million-dollar managers are quick to discard outdated technology, outdated equipment, even outdated ideas. Yet outdated models of knowledge, learning and teaching still dominate the school systems.

"There is great irony in this," says Richard Slaughter, founding professor of the Australian Foresight Institute at Swinburne University.

"All teaching and learning has an inherent orientation toward the future. You can learn from the past – but you can't change it. You always learn for the future. Every act of teaching and learning refers forward to the future that you are anticipating, planning, working towards or trying to avoid. Foresight, or more simply 'thinking ahead', is ubiquitously necessary in everyday life. Human beings simply could not function without the ability to anticipate, to assess alternative courses of action and to evaluate outcomes. This is why futures studies, forward thinking, applied foresight have central roles in education."

So what's wrong with education in Australia today? Dr Slaughter puts it this way: "Successful systems are responsive to their environment. They are resilient, flexible and adaptive: we even call them learning systems. They are innovative and creative, and therefore participative, with shared ownership, shared responsibility.

"Does our education system look like that?" ...

2004

Investing in Oz futures

A rare bouquet for the Feds with the announcement of a \$365m budget for early childhood intervention. This will be welcomed by futurists, whose work constantly emphasises the dramatic effectiveness of preventive approaches rather than expensive, end-of-pipe responses to social issues. In this issue we reproduce extracts from an address by Professor Fiona Stanley, AC, on the subject of early childhood and its influence on individual and societal health...

Futuring: our core competency

June 1998

A path to transformational futures

1998

Dr Richard A. Slaughter

Those of us who live in the late 20th century cannot but be aware of the great schisms in our midst: islands of affluence in seas of poverty and despair; technical virtuosity amid global pollution and species extinctions; profound insight into the structure of the universe contrasted with a nihilistic, often angry pop culture endlessly lost in its own hostility and fear.

This is a time of polarities and contradictions. Who can make sense of such an upheaval?

Western-style progress has all but overwhelmed the globe. To many it seems unquestioned, unstoppable, hegemonic; quite simply "the way things are". But the path to the future which began with the European Enlightenment and drove the Industrial Revolution, which, in a word, created the modern world, was never fully convincing. From earliest days there have been protests, counter-currents, critiques and traditions that held out other possibilities, the seeds of quite different futures...



December 1997/January 1998

Causal Layered Analysis

1998

Actively exploring alternative futures has, until now, usually meant gathering and interpreting data, examining existing assumptions, and exploring alternative futures across a horizontal range of scenarios. Now leading futurist, Professor Sohail Inayatullah... outlines a new technique designed to enrich this process by providing a structure for exploring vertical layers of analysis. While not expressly designed for use in management, the technique has much to offer corporate strategy teams.



Causal Layered Analysis provides a shared structure to facilitate exploration and discussion of unarticulated contexts at deeper and deeper levels. Tested in a variety of settings over the past five years, CLA is especially useful in workshops with individuals of different cultures or different approaches to solving problems. Benefits range from expanding the range and richness of scenarios to "reinstating the vertical in social analysis", shifting the focus from postmodern relativism to global ethics. Inayatullah situates CLA within the field of critical futures research, one of three overlapping dimensions of futures research. "Critical futures research creates a distance from current social practices, allows us to see them as fragile, as particular instead of universal," he said. "Empirical futures research, on the other hand, rests heavily on data and its rational analysis while interpretive futures research seeks to achieve shared understanding. Each dimension has different assumptions about the real, about truth, about the role of the subject, about the nature of the universe and the nature of the future..."

[click here for full stories](#)

March 1998

Cosmonauts overtake cowboys

1998

Instead of asking what the future will be like, why not ask, "what should it be like?", said Dr Peter Ellyard at the Foundation's *Blind Date with the Future* on March 16. "This is the question that marks the difference between leadership and management. Managers respond to change; leaders envision, create and shape change. Australia is an over-managed and under-led country.

Good leaders are rare, at least in leadership positions - which in Australia are actually full of managers, and this is to Australia's detriment. Good leaders... create change through commitment, commitment shared with others through the inspiration of a shared vision which creates hope...

March 2004

The future of futuring

2004

"An integral futures approach allows us for the 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 some very sophisticated frameworks for understanding the inner worlds of people and cultures," says Professor Richard Slaughter. "Futures tasks can now be approached more... successfully than ever before..."

What can organisations learn from the future?

September 1997

The rainforest organisation

1997

"How can we have affluence without effluence?" asks Takashi Kiuchi, chairman and CEO of Mitsubishi Electric in the United States, whose visit to a rainforest changed his life and the way he viewed the corporation. "It is more than a matter of protecting the rain-forest," he told delegates in his keynote address at the recent World Future Society conference in San Francisco. "It is a matter of becoming the rainforest." Takashi's immersion in the Sarawak forests, where he met with everyone from loggers to "visionary environmentalists", made him realise that this was a living system which learns, a self managed organisation. While productive assets were minimal - poor soil, few nutrients - its real capital was hidden in the design. Nothing was wasted. The forest was decentralised. It listened to feedback. It adapted to what it didn't possess. In short - it was incredibly productive. Inspired by this firsthand encounter with a self sustaining system, he returned to the US and began reseeded Mitsubishi Electric...

November 1997

Social responsibility a competitive advantage

1997

Businesses that take their social responsibility seriously will outcompete, with increasing ease, companies that fail to do that in the 21st century, says Professor David Wheeler, head of stakeholder development for The Body Shop International. In Sydney for a workshop on "The Stakeholder Corporation", with Dr Simon Zadek of the New Economics Foundation UK, he listed convincing evidence to support his claim...

[click here for full stories](#)

2005 The real bottom line

July 2005

A new survey shows that socially responsible investment and stakeholder activism is expected to become "mainstream" over the next ten years. Who says so? Not just futurists, who have been talking about such a shift for years. This time it was fund managers responsible for more than \$30.5 trillion in assets.

More, an astonishing nine out of ten predicted that active ownership, where investors seek to influence a company's behaviour, would soon be the norm.

A majority anticipated social and environmental performance indicators would shift from the fringes to the mainstream during this period...

July 2002

Using futures studies to design tomorrow's products

2002

This case study from the files of the Futures Foundation describes the processes used to generate new product concepts to create new income and profit. Two senior futurists worked with IMA to develop broad scenarios of the future lifestyles, values and needs of consumers of general insurance products in the year 2011...

February 1998

Who is the organisation?

1998

With boundaries shifting, blurring and growing more porous, how will future organisations define those who are in them and those who are not? How will they define themselves? And how will organisations manage their relationships with the more and more diverse groups of people who contribute to their success?

Dr Peter Saul, managing director of the Strategic Consulting Group, invited members of the Foundation to consider these questions at the January meeting in Sydney. He offered a model for discussion which develops the Charles Handy 'shamrock' model and defines an organisation as a 'community of contributors', grouped under five main headings. Key implications include shifts in attitudes to staffing, people management and career planning and development, and a redefinition of corporate identity...



October 2001

IQ...EQ...SQ: the new frontier

2001

This report from the visit of Danah Zohar, co-author of "Spiritual intelligence; the ultimate intelligence" summarises her argument that IQ and EQ are themselves not enough to explain the human being. "SQ is not about religion. It is about our need for and access to deep meaning and value in our lives..."

November 1998

What's wrong with a good strategy?

1998

"The best strategies can be the worst strategies, if all they do is move an organisation more quickly to the wrong destination," says futurist Dr Sohail Inayatullah. He argues that strategy should be nested within a wider awareness of who we are, where we are in the world and how we relate to others. "The word 'strategy' tends to option out all the other worldviews," he told a Futures Foundation workshop. "There is, of course, a place for strategy but it is not the only place..."

Who's leading in leadership?

July 1998

Tougher choices for corporate leaders

Corporate leaders who are finding it harder to make good decisions may be encouraged to know it's not necessarily a sign of personal decline. Decision-making is getting harder. Or, to put it another way, the capacity to decide is diminishing, writes Jan Lee Martin.

Unfortunately, it's doing so at a time when the consequences of making just one bad choice can be devastating, and when competitive pressures insist that decision-making be done at an accelerating pace. What is fuelling the fire that's turning up the heat under global and corporate decision-makers? And what, if anything, can they do about it?

Like the cartoon cannibal's cooking pot, the leadership cauldron rests on three big logs:

- information overload;
- growing recognition of the complex interdependence of change; and
- the diminishing value of past experience.

All of these are accelerated by the information and communication revolution...



1998

September 2005

Leadership an extreme sport: Richard Hames at the Futures Summit

Where do we turn for leadership in the growing crisis of our times? Is it time -- the first time in human history -- for children to show their parents how to live? Richard Hames argued, at the recent Futures Summit in Melbourne, that leadership has become an extreme sport, practised by members of an exclusive club... high flyers, whose personal charisma, influence, fortitude and conviction that they are in the right are prerequisites of membership.

"Like any other extreme sport, this kind of leadership is addictive, appealing to the ego to such an extent that those who practise it frequently do so to excess," he said. "Nor are they ever likely willingly to give it up... It is exciting to watch! We glorify it. And we yearn for more. If this isn't leadership, what is?"...

(This report by Jan Lee Martin was published in BOSS Magazine in 2005.)

July 1999

Clever work, clever country

This paper, by Dr Peter Saul, gazes into the crystal ball and describes a possible future for Australia as a magnet for leading knowledge workers and creators of intellectual property - the new source of wealth in the new millennium. It attempts to integrate political, industrial and social policy with some of the major trends that are reshaping management and employment practices in the modern workplace.

On his 45th birthday in 2008, Arthur Richards reflected that it had been almost ten years since he and Jennifer had left stressful jobs in downtown America for one of the new satellite cities in Australia. His colleagues had said that it was a crazy career move. However, Jennifer and Arthur were fed up with incessant travel, the soul-destroying focus on ever-increasing monthly targets and the declining time available for them to spend together. They knew they could never start a family in that kind of lifestyle.

Arthur's last promotion in America, and the move it involved, had disconnected him from most of his old friends. People in the new neighbourhood were locked into lives like theirs, making new friendships difficult.

But the trigger for their decision had been an item on the internet about a radical new industry policy in Australia. One of the political parties (he could not remember which) had recognised that success as a nation in the 21st century was not going to be based on increases in the production of raw materials, agricultural products or low value-added manufactured goods. It saw that the new scarce resource and basis for economic wealth-creation was going to be intellectual capital...

1999

March 2006

Now is the time. Are we the people?

While our political leaders deny that they are cynically pandering to racism to win votes, a new generation of leaders is exploring different kinds of futures for Australia... Ironically, many of the emerging leaders who are exploring these alternative futures are working with the futurists' futurist... Pakistan-born Australian, Sohail Inayatullah.

A scholar of global stature, Professor Inayatullah is a macro-historian and futurist who draws on deep understandings of the sweeps of human history and applies them with the tools of futuring to highlight the choices available to Australians in 21c. He also uses the power of mythology to reach deep into inner issues of identity and self-image, and helps others to understand how these contribute to the kind of futures we choose.

Some of today's media, however, might describe him simply as "a person of Asian appearance". The immediate purpose of his work with new leaders is often to help local communities, governments or global business corporations explore their own futures. But you can't explore any future without understanding its context, and the changing context of global affairs now adds urgency to every local human activity within it.

Like all serious challenges, this one also offers exciting opportunities...

2006

March 1999

The biology of globalisation

Imagine world economics in the form of a living entity -- your body for example, suggested futurist Elisabet Sahtouris in Sydney last week.

"What would happen if the blood cells in your bones were mined as raw materials by the 'northern industrial' heart and lung organs, and transported to production and distribution centres where blood was purified and oxygen added to make a useful product? Imagine it is then announced that blood will be distributed from the heart centre to those organs that can afford it. What is not bought (because some can't afford it) will be disposed of as surplus or stored until the market demand returns.

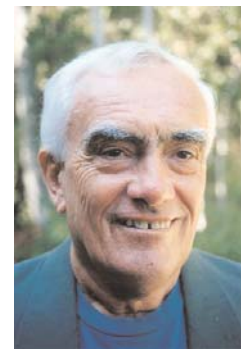
"How long could your body survive that system? How well would it work? Yet that is what we are doing in world economics today... and wondering why the system isn't working..."

1999

May 2005

Rethinking Oz

2005



"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?..."

STORMING THE MINDSETS

"Cultural creatives"

Is the USA going through a cultural revolution? US researchers Paul Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson say it is.

"Since the 1960s, 26% of the adults in the United States - 50 million people - have made a comprehensive shift in their worldview, values and way of life - their culture, in short. These creative, optimistic millions are at the leading edge of several kinds of cultural change, deeply affecting not only their own lives but our larger society as well. We call them the Cultural Creatives because, innovation by innovation, they are shaping a new kind of American culture for the twenty-first century."

Ray and Anderson note that this is no small shift: "Changing a worldview literally means changing what you think is real. Some closely related changes contribute to and follow from changes in worldview: changes in values, your fundamental life priorities; changes in lifestyle, the way you spend your time and money; and changes in livelihood, how you make that money in the first place.

"As recently as the early 1960s, less than 5% of the population was engaged in making these momentous changes - too few to measure in surveys. In just over a generation, that proportion grew steadily to 26%. That may not sound like much in this age of nanoseconds, but on the timescale of whole civilisations where major developments are measured in centuries, it is shockingly quick..."

2003

October 2001

Trust me, I'm a Scientist

2001

For nearly 20 years, futurists have been discussing "post-normal science" - a new understanding of science that gives up traditional ideas about the purity of science as an objective, values-free discipline and recognises that even science sits within a social context.

July 2002

Capitalism forever?

"Why companies fail", a remarkable essay by Ram Charan and Jerry Useem in *Fortune* magazine (May 27, 47-58) offers ten reasons to explain the crash of great companies and three ways to prosper. While focused specifically on companies, what Charan and Useem miss is that their analysis can be employed to understand the globalised system of capitalism that sustains these companies, writes Sohail Inayatullah.

"Companies are born, companies die, capitalism moves forward. Creative Destruction, they call it", what US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill calls "the genius of capitalism". But economic and meaning systems (that frame what it is that we do when we wake up in the morning) also fail.

First, is the problem of success. "A number of studies show that people are less likely to make optimal decisions after prolonged periods of success. NASA, Enron, Lucent, Worldcom - all had reached the mountaintop before they ran into trouble". Might not this be the case with the world capitalism system itself, after 500 years of success? No one can see that it too might fail: we are vested in it. From superannuation to life in the Plaza, capitalism defines what we do and how we do it. Fish cannot see water nor can we see life after capitalism. Those at the centre, who are mostly deeply vested in it, especially can not see its future..."

[click here for full stories](#)

The war on terror...

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

March 2006

The Nobel speech : Pinter

"As every single person here knows, the justification for the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein possessed a highly dangerous body of weapons of mass destruction, some of which could be fired in 45 minutes, bringing about appalling devastation. We were assured that was true. It was not true. We were told that Iraq had a relationship with Al Qaeda and shared responsibility for the atrocity in New York of September 11th 2001. We were assured that this was true. It was not true. We were told that Iraq threatened the security of the world. We were assured it was true. It was not true. The truth is something entirely different. The truth is to do with how the United States understands its role in the world and how it chooses to embody it..."

March 2002

The future of democracy

2002

It doesn't seem long since futurists were discussing the need to replace Westminster style democracy with a system that's less flawed. In today's more serious world the mood has darkened, as more and more warn of emerging challenges that make even a flawed democracy look like an endangered species. Those sounding the alarm range from NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir AC to the irreverent young philosophy professor from London, George Monbiot. And they include a number of writers in Australian media.

For example, Tony Harris questioned whether the Federal Government has the constitutional right to silence its officials with new legislation carrying jail terms for public servants who release non-authorised information or journalists who print it (AFR 12 02 02). An editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald (06 02 02) argued that the legislation "would have a truly chilling effect on democratic debate". Brian Toohy reported the concerns of "civil liberty and whistleblower organisations" and pointed out that the proposed legislation gives no indication that it applies to leaks that have nothing to do with national security. Former editor Peter Robinson argued that the media was being silenced at the very time it needs to be heard...

October 2001

Legacy of the Twin Towers

As the world adjusts to its brand new history, following the World Trade Centre tragedy, there are signs that attitudes and discussions may be maturing to a level of wisdom that offers real hope for a better future. Indeed, some futurists see September 2001 as marking a crucial transition from the divided, conflict-ridden "us and them" world of the human past to a future that includes inescapable, widespread recognition of our essential global unity. That recognition provides a context within which we can jointly address not only terrorism, but also the global social injustices that foster its growth. One of our favourite proposals was from the person who said, a few days after the event: "Bomb Afghanistan? Of course we should... We should bomb them with grain, bomb them with food, bomb them with resources, bomb them

2001

future news special September 2001

A state of war? Or a state of mind?

Senior futurist Professor Sohail Inayatullah comments on the futures of the world system, in the wake of the tragedies in the USA this week.

First, this tragedy should be seen as a crime against humanity, and not in simple, West vs Islam terms. It is worth noting that more than 500 Pakistanis were working at the World Trade Centre at the time of the attack.

The nature of globalisation and the multicultural societies being created around the world makes it inappropriate to use "us" and "them" language, makes violence problematic. And thus it should be seen that so long as we are using dichotomous "evil = the other" language, we are demonstrating the failure of the way we imagine global politics.

Second, while violent responses are understandable, they will create new victims, turning succeeding generations into aggressors. The equation thus must be justice with healing. Healing means understanding how others feel - why they would risk all for terror. Healing also means avoiding the two most likely scenarios...

Scenario 1: Fortress OECD, with high gates and big dogs

Scenario 2: Cowboy justice

It means, instead, creating a Gaia of civilisation, a way

Where science meets spirituality

The search for the wholeness of life, of mind and of nature is spreading and deepening from year to year, according to Professor Ervin Laszlo, president of the Club of Budapest and a keynote speaker at the *Global Mind, Global Soul, Global Action* conference in Taiwan. And it's just as well, he says, if we want human civilization to survive.

After a challenging exploration of the frontiers of theoretical physics, including new understandings of the nature of consciousness, he concluded: "Wholeness is a defining characteristic of the kind of planetary civilisation that could overcome problems created by the mechanistic, manipulative rationality of the civilisation still dominant today."

Trends that have been building up will break down. "The meaning of non-sustainability is that you reach a point where something else happens...Everything is possible except the status quo..."

and the war on Terra

July 2006: Humanity has been waging a war on Terra since the birth of the industrial age. At first it was done in ignorance of the consequences, but now we know better. Our planet and its life forms have been severely wounded by human over-population, pollution and wars. And there's worse to come with the global warming that results from our post-industrial lifestyles. So what happens next?...



The really big picture: the future of us!

September 2003

Humanity 3000: the Seattle seminars

Do we have reason to live for another 1,000 years?

How big a vision does humanity need to sustain itself during the next 1,000 years? And what do we need to know to survive the next 1,000 years? Futures Foundation chairman Charles Brass asked himself these questions in preparation for attendance at the annual Seattle seminar on Humanity 3000.

In response to the first question, he prepared a paper on the premise that "a conscious attempt at designing humanity's future was both necessary and possible, and that a viable vision is a fundamental precursor to such a design."

He suggested that any viable vision for humanity's future must arise out of collective self-awareness.

"If, as I believe, we are reaching the zenith of our focus on the importance of individual awareness, then perhaps a reconnection with collective awareness is not so far away."

Later he put it more strongly: "My final thesis, therefore, is that any viable vision for humanity in the year 3000 is only capable of emerging from a powerfully collective self-awareness; and that once this condition prevails (as it will) the emergence of such a vision is inevitable..."



August 2003

What do we need to know to survive the next 1000 years?

The paramount thing we need to know in order to survive for the next 1000 years is the scope of our present knowledge. That human beings once knew, for example, how to harness steam to produce power is critical to inspiring future generations, even if the actual technology to produce a steam engine (and its many derivatives) is lost. There is plenty of evidence throughout history of parallel discoveries or inventions, once a fundamental possibility had been revealed, but it is hard to conceive of something if one doesn't even know that it is possible. The first thing to know is that we once knew.

Secondly we need to continuously know some fundamental properties of matter, of ourselves and of our universe. Losing knowledge of the periodic table and the gross structure of matter, for example, would be disastrous for our capacity to shape our environment to meet our needs. Similarly, losing knowledge of our biology would increase hugely the risks to life and longevity. And knowledge of our place in the universe is essential to ward off a return to the sorts of mythological interpretations which delayed societal development in the past.

Thirdly I contend we need to continuously know how to harness energy for human use...

[click here for full stories](#)

August 2003

2003

"WE LIVE DOWNSTREAM FROM YOU IN TIME"

Canadian futurist Allen Tough gives a voice to future generations:

"You are alive at a pivotal moment in humanity's development. You are making some of the most important choices in human history. Your era is marked by positive and negative potentials of such newness and magnitude that you can hardly understand them. Through your public policies and daily lives, the people of your era have tremendous power to influence the future course of humanity's story.

"We strongly care about your choices, of course, since we benefit or suffer from them quite directly. We live downstream from you in time; whatever you put into the stream flows on to our era.

"We will be very grateful if you will devote your best efforts to four particular changes..."

July 2006

First steps to a Terran civilisation

2006

A new movement is gathering around the world aimed at developing clear ideas of what a planetary civilisation might look like and how it could work. As the World Wisdom Alliance meets in Toronto this month to discuss *Creating the New Civilization*, the Futures Foundation joins other global organisations in supporting this visionary initiative. Ironically, the growing interest in this logical next step for humanity emerges at a time when mainstream media are reporting a trend to "resource nationalism", with indications that the nation-state could see a resurgence in strength...