



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 17

May 2017

Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
Benalla 3672

Next Meeting

The next meeting of Benalla Sustainable Future Group will be on

Thursday 22nd June 2017

and this will be our

Annual General Meeting

From now on our AGM will be held in June rather than August. This year we do not have a guest speaker but we will be showing the 30-minute documentary *Guarding the Galilee*, a film about the epic fight to stop Adani's Carmichael coal mine. Presented by Queensland born actor Michael Caton, [Guarding the Galilee](#) is a documentary on the battle to stop the biggest coal mine in Australian history, Adani's Carmichael project. The film features farmers, dive instructors and boat operators all concerned about the impacts that Adani's mine would have on water resources, climate and the reef.

The award-winning documentary team capture the raw beauty of Central Queensland, where the Adani Carmichael mine threatens essential water resources. After the screening, there will be an opportunity for discussion about what we've seen and what can be done to [Stop Adani](#).



President's Column

Adani - Australia's Climate Bomb

We have recently learnt that half the corals in the Great Barrier Reef are dead - not just bleached - but **dead**. This has been caused by the 2016 heatwave and the increased ocean temperatures of 2017. These extreme weather events have been brought on by global warming which is fuelled by increasing greenhouse gas emissions largely due to the burning of fossil fuels, coal in particular. And yet the Federal Liberal government and the Queensland Labor government are going out of their way to encourage the development of the Adani Carmichael coal mine.

The Federal government's Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) is considering making a \$1 billion loan to Adani to build a railway for the mine, while it has been reported that the Queensland government is discussing giving Adani a 'royalty holiday' to help them get started.

A recent poll by ReachTELL has found that 93% of voters do not want public money used to prop up Adani's giant coal mine. They would prefer taxpayer cash to go towards renewable energy or education infrastructure. (*Voters reject subsidies for coal mine*, Adam Gartrell, *The Age*, 22/5/2017) Veteran environmental campaigner and former Greens senator Bob Brown has previously pointed to Adani's proposed Carmichael coal mine as the new Franklin River of environmental protest in Australia. For those readers unfamiliar with the Franklin, the Franklin River campaign was about stopping the Tasmanian government damming the Franklin River, one of the last truly wild rivers in Tasmania. Hundreds of protestors were arrested during 1982 and it became an election issue during the 1983 Federal election. The proposed damming was finally stopped by the newly

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi

elected Hawke Labor government following the election. The results of the ReachTELL poll would support Bob Brown's statement as would the fact that there are very many environmental and other groups involved in the [Stop Adani](#) campaign.

David Holmes, Senior Lecturer, Monash University wrote an article for The Conversation, 12/4/2017, titled: *Australia's climate bomb: the senselessness of Adani's Carmichael coal mine*. He writes, "The consequences of going ahead with the mine are almost incalculable. This is not simply because of the emissions it will produce, but from the fact it promotes and normalises the insanity that coal can still be "good for humanity". Yet the future of this "climate bomb" hangs in the balance." The following points are taken from his ten most-absurd things about the Adani mine.

1) As the largest coal mine in the Australia when completed, Adani will legitimise the idea of mining all of the coal in the Galilee Basin. If extracted and burnt, this will get the world one-third of the way toward 2°C of global warming.

2) With climate-change-induced extreme weather events exacting billions of dollars of damage across Australia, and especially in Queensland, the idea that public money would be used to increase these damage bills by injecting even more energy into the world's climate system by accelerating greenhouse gas emissions is absurd.

3) The mine lies adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef. The heaviest risk to the reef's future is a continued increase in greenhouse gases.

4) That the Queensland Labor government could buy into a jobs campaign around the mine when renewable technologies can carry the promise of even more jobs, and without risk to the Great Barrier Reef that is threatened by the dredging associated with the mine, and therefore is a danger to the tourism industry, is outrageous.

5) Adani's argument that somehow the mine will be lifting Indians out of poverty has also been a favourite of Coalition MPs. However this argument has been turned on its head by India's economy wide plan that calls for a halt to new coal fired generators and a tripling of renewable energy generation within five years.

Turnbull to Adani: You will get your mine! Accused of 'Sucking Up' to Adani

During his visit to India in April Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull lauded the controversial Adani coal mine as a boon for Australia that will deliver tens of thousands of jobs and significant state and federal revenue for decades to come. The glowing endorsement followed his meeting with the company's principal, Gautam Adani, and company executives.

Mark Kenny (*PM to Adani: you will get your mine, The Age*, 12/4/2017) reports that sources said Mr Turnbull had reassured the billionaire businessman that legal hurdles associated with the Native Title Act would be resolved and would not be allowed to frustrate the \$21

billion investment. He said, "the issue needs to be fixed and will be fixed".

GetUp environmental justice campaigns director, Sam Register, had this to say about Malcolm Turnbull's reported comments. "The Great Barrier Reef is dying and Turnbull is in India sucking up to the very man who is going to make it worse. His idea of protecting the Reef is giving a coal billionaire a billion dollars to build a coal mine right on the Reef's doorstep. It's time Turnbull stops pretending he represents the interest of Australians, not the interests of huge mining corporations. As the rest of Australia works to save the Reef, Turnbull has turned his back."

This is just another example of the federal government actively lobbying for the Carmichael coal mine – something that Federal Energy and Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg was caught out doing at the 2016 UN Climate Talks in Marrakech. (Sophie Vorrath, ReNew Economy, 11/04/2017)

John Lloyd

Vale John Clarke

John Clarke died on April 8th on a bushwalking trip. Far far too early - but not a bad way to go.

We remember John Clarke now for his satiric interviews with John Dawe, no mask or costume required. They really hit to the nub of the issue. New Zealanders will remember him mostly as Fred Dagg. To Kiwis in this role he was 'bigger than the Beatles', according to his friend Sam Neill who describes him as, "a shy, erudite, very charming, witty, quiet man".

As the correspondent below says, "Who can take his place?" Vale John Clarke.



Climate Council on Risks of Carmichael Coalmine

The Climate Council has recently released a new report titled, "**Risky Business: Health, Climate and Economic Risks of the Carmichael Coalmine.**"

The report shows that the Carmichael Mine poses serious risks to the environment, public health and North Queensland tourism. If the Galilee Basin mine were a country it would rank in the **top 15 worst emitting nations in the world**. In addition it would be emitting **more than 1.3 times Australia's current annual pollution levels** from *all* sources.

Plans for Australia's largest coal mine to go ahead are fundamentally at odds with Australia's commitment to tackling climate change.

Key Findings from this report

1. Developing any new thermal coalmines, particularly of the scale of the Carmichael mine in the Galilee Basin, is fundamentally at odds with protecting Australians from the impacts of climate change.

Climate change, driven by greenhouse gas pollution from burning coal and other fossil fuels, is increasing the severity and frequency of extreme weather events in Australia, such as heatwaves, bushfires and intense rainfall.

2. Opening up the Galilee Basin undermines other industries, such as tourism and agriculture.

Coal expansion will drive further warming of the oceans, which increases the risk of extreme bleaching to Australia's multi-billion dollar tourism asset, the Great Barrier Reef.

Australia's agricultural industry is vulnerable to worsening extreme weather events, like extreme heat and more severe drought. Coal burning here, or abroad, further increases those risks.

3. Coal is very harmful to human health.

Particulate air pollution (fine particles that enter the lungs) caused 4.2 million deaths globally in 2015. Burning of coal is a major source of particulate air pollution.

There has been a recent re-emergence of the life threatening 'black lung' (coal workers' pneumoconiosis) in Queensland, with 21 reported cases.

Coal's health impacts cost Australian taxpayers an estimated \$2.6 billion every year.

4. The Carmichael mine is a risky financial investment and promises of economic benefit are overblown.

Global investment in new renewable capacity is now greater than investment in fossil fuels, and the gap is expected to continue to widen as

technology innovation progresses and investment in renewables surges ahead.

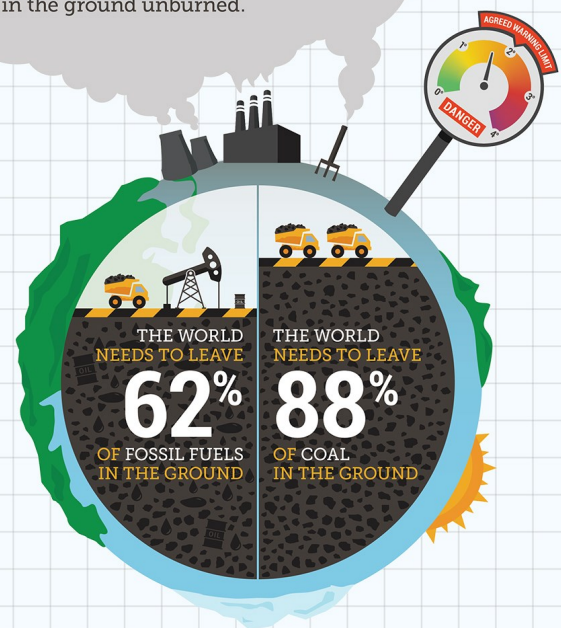
Plummeting costs of renewable energy and the reduced coal demand from China, combined with India's aggressive move towards energy self-sufficiency place Australia's new coal mine and associated rail/port infrastructure investments on shaky ground, increasing the risk of stranded assets.

The full report can be found [here](#).

The Climate Council has also created the following infographic about the Carbon Budget.

WHAT IS OUR CARBON BUDGET?

To stay below a catastrophic 2°C rise in global temperature most of the world's fossil fuel reserves must be kept in the ground unburned.



AT THE CURRENT RATE

We will blow our carbon budget within the next two decades or even sooner.

CLIMATECOUNCIL.ORG.AU

crowd-funded science information



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

Australian Conservation Foundation vows to pursue all avenues to stop Adani loan

The Australian Conservation Foundation has warned it will pursue all avenues, including possible legal action, to stop a concessional loan being granted to a rail line associated with the controversial Adani coalmine.

The ACF's president, prominent businessman Geoff Cousins, told Guardian Australia the environmental group would "pursue [directors of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (Naif)] through whatever means possible" in the event the Naif granted the rail project a loan.

Cousins pointed to evidence given before a Senate estimates hearing earlier this week where officials for Infrastructure Australia said they had not identified the rail project linking the coalmine with the Abbot Point port as a priority.

Adani is seeking a \$900m concessional loan from the Naif for the rail line which links the mine with Abbot point. Infrastructure Australia and the Naif are required to consult on projects worth more than \$100m.

Cousins said the evidence given in Senate estimates this week indicated the loan was nowhere near being granted. "Clearly all the rumours that this loan is about to be granted are untrue," he said.

Cousins said the ACF has already been advised by lawyers at Environmental Justice Australia that Naif directors would breach their duties to consider the financial risks associated with climate change if they make an investment decision in support of a Galilee Basin rail project.

***Source: Katharine Murphy,
The Guardian, 23/5/2017***

Postscript

The Queensland government announced on 27th May that it would refuse to facilitate public money for Adani's coal infrastructure.

The proposed \$1 billion dollar loan from the Federal government's Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) needed to pass through the Queensland government to get to Adani. And now it seems this route is blocked. It's unclear now how the Federal government can legally get NAIF funding to Adani.



Budget 2017: No mention, no policy, no idea on climate

Not a single mention. Climate change is the biggest social, moral and political issue of our time and yet Treasurer Scott Morrison didn't utter those words once in his entire Federal Budget speech.

Alarm bells are ringing because the Turnbull Government seems determined to continue Tony Abbott's environmental negligence.

This is a budget that puts big polluters ahead of the community and the air, water, forest and land that sustain us. It will be every day Australians that pay the price.

In a nutshell, the Budget continues with a 14% cut in environment expenditure since the Coalition formed government in 2013; this is projected to be a 27% cut by 2020. Meanwhile, \$7.6 billion have been allocated for polluting subsidies - more than six times the environment budget.

There is no climate change policy, no plan for the environment and no plan to transition the energy economy to prepare for the next century.

Astonishingly, Malcolm Turnbull still wants to give Adani a "cheap" billion dollar loan from his coal slush fund. This one loan is almost the same amount of money that our prime minister is willing to provide our nation's rivers, reefs and forests this year. He has lost his moral compass.

The prioritisation of gas in this budget further demonstrates the Coalition's failure to recognise the need for a long-term transition plan for Australia's energy system. Budget measures that foreshadow investment in gas infrastructure and new gas exploration mean Australia will remain shackled to fossil fuels instead of accelerating the transition to renewables.

Australians want their elected representatives to take seriously their responsibility to Australia's reefs, rivers, people, forests and wildlife seriously. But, unsurprisingly, there is a crisis of confidence in the Turnbull Government's ability to protect nature.

***Kelly O'Shanassy, CEO,
Australian Conservation Foundation***



**AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION**

*"We are the first generation to feel the impacts of climate change,
and the last generation to be able to do something about it." former US President, Barack Obama*

Coalition voters want renewables

The Turnbull government's campaign of emphasising the risks of moving too quickly to renewable energy has been thrown into question by polling that suggests a majority of its supporters disagree. Left-leaning think tank, the Australia Institute, surveyed 1420 voters about whether the country was moving too slowly or too quickly in embracing renewable energy. It found two-thirds of voters - and 55 percent of those who identified as Coalition voters - believed the shift was too slow. Only 9 percent - and 17 percent of Coalition supporters - said it was happening too fast.

On cost of energy, voters appeared to reject claims that renewable energy was the cause of significant power bill increases. Forty-five percent believed electricity prices would go up if the national renewable energy target of about 23.5 percent by 2020 was abolished. Only 19 percent thought bills would go down. Coalition supporters were broadly in step with the majority: 41 percent said ending the target would actually push up price; 23 percent believed they would come down.

The support for clean energy was consistent with a previous Fairfax/Ipsos poll that found 61 percent of voters said it was time to turn to energy sources other than coal.

The Australia Institute poll found 52 percent of voters backed an increase of the renewable energy target while only 9 percent wanted it cut. A clearer majority (73 percent) supported the introduction of a higher target for 2030. More than three-quarters of voters (77 percent) supported state renewable energy targets to drive further investment.

**Source: Adam Morton,
The Age, 10/4/2017**

Renewable Energy Benalla (REB)

As part of the involvement of Beyond Zero Emissions (BZE) we had a successful workshop on May 1st jointly conducted with Imogen Jubb from BZE involving a number of local stakeholders with an interest in renewable energy, including businesses and agencies. There were presentations from Totally Renewable Yackandandah and the Strathbogie Pumped Hydro Project as well as input from government agencies and Ausnet Services.

A Baseline Emissions Report for Benalla that had been prepared by BZE was also presented.

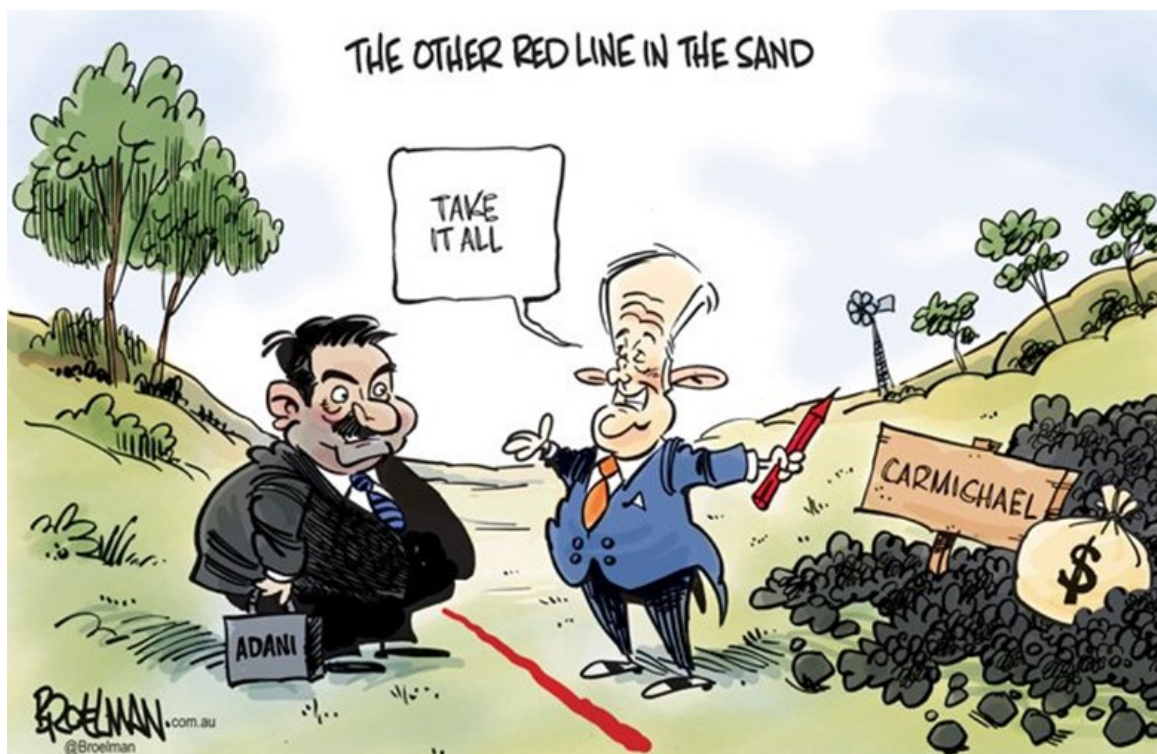
Many ideas about possible actions to eliminate emissions in Benalla were put forward under the three headings of: Buildings and Energy Efficiency; Solar and Community Energy; Utility Scale and Storage. These ideas will form the basis of a transition strategy to 100% renewable energy.

REB has been discussing a communication strategy to connect with the community. The development of a website and design of a logo are seen to be important parts of this strategy. We have applied for a *Climate Acton Network Australia* grant to fund these developments.

REB is also interested in making contact with youth and will seek assistance from Benalla Council's Youth Project Coordinator.

We are also seeking to make contact with the Benalla developer who has a permit for a new housing development on the old woollen mill site. We would like to talk to him about the possibility of making this a 'model' development for solar access and energy efficient homes.

John Lloyd



Divestment and Stranded Assets

At the April 27th general meeting of BSFG, our guest speaker, Pablo Brait from Market forces, spoke about the issue of the large financial institutions in Australia (banks, superannuation funds, insurance companies, and health funds) with their investment in fossil fuel companies, either directly through loan funds, or by investment in shares. He urged us to not only review our own investments or fund memberships, but to encourage others to withdraw support from institutions which continue to support the fossil fuel industries.

Coincidentally, in the Age newspaper the day before our meeting, former Liberal leader, Dr John Hewson warned that Australian retirement savings could be put at risk unless regulators force the financial sector to be more transparent in managing the investment risks created by climate change.

Then on May 16th, the Age published an article entitled "Race to electric cars fuels world of stranded assets". This article, based on a report by Stanford University economist Tony Seba, "Rethinking Transportation 2020 - 2030", paints the scenario that "we are on the cusp of one of the fastest, deepest, most consequential disruptions of transportation in history".

"The tipping point will arrive over the next two or three years as electric vehicle battery ranges surpass 320 kilometres and EV prices in the US drop to \$US30,000. By 2022 the low-end models will be down to \$US20,000. After that, the avalanche will sweep all before it."

India is drawing up plans to phase out all petrol and diesel cars by 2032. China is moving in parallel, pushing for 7 million electric vehicles by 2025.

Seba asserts that it will become harder to find a petrol station, spares or anybody to fix the 2000 moving parts that bedevil the internal combustion engine. The simplicity of the EV model is breathtaking - the Tesla S has 18 moving parts, one hundred times fewer than a combustion engine car.

The parallel is what happened to film cameras - and to Kodak - once digital rivals hit the market. It was swift and brutal. So be aware that your car could leave you stranded- in more than one way!

Peter Holmes



Turtles not coal

I'm sure we have all been following developments in relation to plans for Adani's Carmichael coal mine in inland Queensland. It really has been a roller coastal ride in terms of the good and the bad. I am encouraged when I hear that a significant number of financial institutions both in Australia, i.e. our big four banks and others globally, will not fund the venture. My optimism however, is dashed when I read of our Prime Minister's recent visit to India to what can only be called 'courting' those backing this destructive, outdated proposal. I understand that there is certainly some resistance in India to the use of coal fired power and yet we persist.

A recent article in *The Age* alerted me to broader issues which if not monitored and addressed, may well cause significant environmental damage even if the coal mine does not go ahead. Peter Hannam reported that the Turnbull government has quietly axed eight environmental conditions aimed at protecting vulnerable turtle species that will be adversely effected by Adani's terminal expansion at Abbott Point in Queensland. The changes to regulations were quietly signed off by Josh Frydenberg on May 10th. Minister for the Environment??

Imogen Zethoven of The Australian Marine Conservation Society tells us that:

"The beaches at Abbot Point are important nesting sites for flatback turtles and the region is a high priority foraging habitat for green turtles. Both of these species are listed as vulnerable under federal and Queensland law."

Given that Abbot Point's environment record was already under a cloud after coal sediment entered a nearby wetland during Cyclone Debbie in March and Adani is being investigated for possibly breaching its temporarily elevated pollution limits, can we really trust Adani to abide by regulations anyway? As much as our politicians assure us that offsets will offer adequate protection I'm not really sure. The trouble with wildlife, in this case turtles, is that once they become extinct they are gone for ever and do we, or India, really need the coal anyway?

Sources:

Trouble for turtles as protections fall away [by Peter Hannam](#)

Four environmental reasons why fast-tracking the Carmichael coal mine is a bad idea [from The Conversation](#)

Freida Andrews

The Relentless Growth of CO2 Emissions

I was shocked today (Friday, 26 May 2017), listening to Dr Kerry Higgs talking on SoundCloud's [Conversation Earth](#) about her book 'Collision Course - Endless Growth on a Finite Planet'. She mentioned that global CO2 levels were now 410 parts per million (ppm)! It was very much in the news when CO2 levels reached 400 ppm a few years ago! How could we be at 410 ppm now? I remember Kerry receiving a standing ovation after she gave a stunning talk titled 'Collision Course: The Growth Delusion' at last year's Swanpool Environmental Film Festival.

I decided to check and see what CO2 levels are now and found a website [Earths CO2](#) which confirmed that yes CO2 is now at 410 ppm. The twitter feed on the website was showing 409.98 ppm CO2 in the atmosphere on May 23, 2017 at Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii. From figures on this website in 5.5 years the level of CO2 has risen 16 ppm; 2012-394, 2013-396, 2014-399, 2015-401, now 410. Another website confirms that in late May 2017 the daily average CO2 at [Mauna Loa](#) was trending around 410 ppm.

An increase of 16 ppm in 5.5 years is 2.9 ppm per year. If this trend continues we will reach 450 ppm in 14 years or 2031; 500 ppm will be reached in 31 years or 2048. How are we trending regarding the [Paris agreement](#)? Article 2, 1 (a) of the agreement states:

"Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change".

On the Skeptical Science website the article [Why 450 ppm is not a safe target](#) reports that "a target of 450 parts per million (ppm) CO2 in the atmosphere is widely regarded as synonymous with keeping mean global temperature by 2100 to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. This is very misleading and dangerous. For reasons set out below, achievement of that target, probably by **2030**, is likely to result in mean global temperatures dangerously more than the predicted 2°C".

The above analysis shows we will probably reach 450 ppm by 2031 and therefore mean global temperatures will exceed the Paris agreement to hold the increase in global temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

When you consider that the pre-industrial level of CO2 was about 280 ppm we have a lot of work to do to decrease our emissions to levels required for a safe climate. There is no political leadership to achieve the emission reductions required by the Paris agreement. I am reminded of a quote I heard from Kerry Higgs in another talk on SoundCloud's Conversation Earth, [The Free Market Assault On Science](#), "It's very difficult to get a man to see a truth that jeopardises his back pocket". While CO2 emissions continue to increase relentlessly.

Note the above quote was attributed to [Upton Sinclair](#). The [Conversation Earth](#) channel on SoundCloud is a collection of interviews by Dave Gardner of [Growth Busters](#) who has worked for years challenging economic growth and the impact it has on the environment.

Peter Maddock

Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2017

brought to you by Benalla Sustainable Future Group and Swanpool Landcare.



We're very excited about this year's program as we've managed to get three excellent speakers to come to Swanpool. We also have the best of films selected to accompany their talks.

Saturday 24th June

1.00 pm to 9.40 pm

The ticket price is just \$25 and that includes all three sessions, afternoon tea and a light evening meal. Booking is essential so call David Beer on

0498 007 988

Catering is again provided by the Swanpool catering Group and we now know what's on the menu:

Afternoon Tea: Plates with a variety of sweet and savoury choices, tea and coffee

Dinner: Two soup choices, 3 Lasagne choices, Vegetarian, Beef or Chicken

Dessert: Scones with jam and cream, cheese and fruit, another sweet treat yet to be decided, tea and coffee

Because BSFG is helping to organise the event we ask all members attending to give a hand during the day to clear away plates and mugs.

Benalla Permaculture is also helping out this year. We'd like to thank our sponsors - Benalla Rural City (through a community grant), Gecko CLaN, Granite Creeks Landcare Network and the GBCMA. We also appreciate Winton Wetlands advertising at this event and throughout the year.

Full details about the speakers and a program to download can be found on the BSFG [website](#).

Please call David and reserve your tickets now. You only need to pay at the ticket box on the day when you collect them (cash only please).

Ian Herbert

Reduce, Reuse, Refuse, Rethink and Repair

Maybe you are not ready to give up the plastic altogether but there are some easy ways to make a big difference in reducing the amount of plastic waste that is a huge burden to our environment. Recycling goes some of the way to easing the issue; however it is a much better option to avoid the use of plastic as much as possible.

Bring your own shopping bag

I am thinking hessian is best. Or why not make your own out of left over fabric? In addition to bigger carryall bags, you can take your own reusable produce bags or don't use produce bags at all.

Ditch bottled water

Such an easy way to reduce waste. Keep a refillable bottle handy and take it wherever you go. Bottled water is incredibly expensive compared to the tap. Say 'no' to bottled water.

BYO Coffee Cup

Coffee Cups are usually lined with a polyethylene making it difficult to be recycled. Take your own refillable cup....you may even get your coffee at a reduced price!!

Choose cardboard over plastic bottles and bags

Try pasta in a box instead of a bag, detergent in a box instead of a bottle. Even better, see if the cardboard is from a sustainable source.

Say 'no' to straws

They are just not necessary. Paper or stainless straws are an option.

Get plastic out of the makeup drawer and bathroom

Research microbeads. Aim for none in your products.

Make your period waste-free

There are non-disposable options. Eg. Menstrual cups

Skip the disposable razor

Re-think your food storage

Try and use glass instead of plastic for fridge/pantry storage. Take your own containers for the left over restaurant meal. Use reusable sandwich wraps e.g. 'Keep Leaf' eco-friendly bags.

Use cloth nappies over disposable nappies

Shop in Bulk

Consider joining the BSFG Bulk Food Co-op. Keep your eye out for places with refill stations or bulk purchases.

Think about fashion choices

Do you really need another item of clothing? Consider clothes swapping with your friends and family. Check out the Op Shop.

Travelling?

Try and follow the practices you have at home. Carry a lightweight rolled-up reusable carry bag. Purify the tap water – choose to avoid the bottled water. My daughter recently travelled Sri Lanka, India and Nepal for 3 months and used a 'Steripen' handheld water purifier....was fantastic, easy to use, saved heaps of dollars, and heaps of plastic bottle waste.

CHOOSE TO REFUSE

Check out the ABC's "War on Waste":

<http://www.abc.net.au/ourfocus/waronthewaste/>

And the website for "Plastic Free July":

<http://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

Also recommended reading:

<http://treadingmyownpath.com/2017/01/12/online-zero-waste-plastic-free-stores/>

Wendy Baker



The Age, 18/4/2017

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