



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 23

March 2019

Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
Benalla 3672

Next Meeting

The next General Meeting of Benalla Sustainable Future Group will be held at the Benalla Uniting Church on

Thursday the 28th of March from 7.30pm

until about 9.30pm.

Our Guest Speaker for this meeting is

Serenity Hill

Topic: 'Food, unincorporated'

The Open Food Network was founded by Serenity Hill and Kirsten Larsen in 2012 as part of the Open Food Foundation. It is a platform that supports a food system that is open and fair, where producers and community based enterprises can sell local, seasonal produce online to their community. It has now grown to a global movement.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Peter Maddock, Secretary

How soon will Benalla feel the impact of people changing their minds due to Climate Change?

Climate Change has a habit of sneaking up on individuals, businesses and whole communities so slowly, they hardly perceive it.

What most people in Benalla do not realise is that in Benalla, along with the rest of regional Australia, we have three times the green-house gas emissions per head of population as people in Australia's capital cities and Australians as a whole have the highest greenhouse gas emissions per head of any county in the world. Sure there are not as many of us as in other parts of the world but, if they adopted the same lifestyle, we would need seven planets.

So the issue for us about climate change is not necessarily the more direct extreme weather events such as floods, bushfires and tornadoes made worse by climate change, but the actions and life choices people begin to take because of climate change that

impact on Benalla.

We, as a whole community, are dangling precariously on the end of a largely fossil fuel based energy, food and materials chain. Sure we are installing solar farms and panels that reduce our impact but so are many others and we may still find ourselves cut off from the future as an embarrassment if we are not careful. In order to make any real gains and save our skins, we have to become smarter and the experts at living in this environment with minimal environmental impact.

To save the planet we have to do it so well that others do the same. It is not easy and whole new types of infrastructure and design models need to be developed but this is also a really great opportunity. So huge coordinated actions and inactions are required and no particular regional centre anywhere seems to be currently the expert on this. Why not Benalla when we need to do it anyway?

There is a risk in always waiting for others to do it first - too many people have been waiting too long for others to take action on climate change. When solutions come about we would have to pay for it compared to potentially earning income to the region from it.

What we have to worry about is the whip cracks where something small like an energy shock or an economic downturn elsewhere in the global system causes an amplifying ripple that makes it less viable economically and environmentally to survive here in Benalla. On the end of a whip crack we could suffer very detrimental damage to our infrastructure and social fabric, so it is in our interests to take control and start protecting ourselves and our planet.

We have a narrowing window of opportunity. We can either open it and get some fresh air that has been cooled by natural low impact measures or have a window slam shut and shatter because we did not look beyond the window and start planning and acting to do more than our bit. There are some great examples of some really interesting and practical things happening locally, adapting to our local conditions and environment.

***Concerned Benalla Citizen
(name supplied)***

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

Australia's extreme heat is a sign of things to come

Lisa Cox and Jonathon Watts writing for *The Guardian* (2/2/2019) report that Australia sweltered through the hottest month in its history in January, spurring mass deaths of fish, fire warnings and concerns among climate scientists that extreme heat is hitting faster and harder than anticipated.

For the first time since records began, the country's mean temperature in January exceeded 30°C (86°F), according to the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), which said daily extremes – in some places just short of 50°C – were unprecedented.

"There's been so many records it's really hard to count," said Andrew Watkins, a senior climatologist at BOM, after January registered Australia's warmest month for mean, maximum and minimum temperatures.

This followed the country's warmest December on record, with heat waves in every Australian state and territory.

Climate change is the long-term driver. "The warming trend which has seen Australian temperatures increase by more than 1C in the last 100 years also contributed to the unusually warm conditions," Watkins said.

The bureau's monthly report said the heatwaves were unprecedented in their scale and duration. The highest temperatures of the month were recorded in Port Augusta in South Australia, where thermometers registered 49.5°C, but the most relentless heat was in Birdsville, Queensland, which endured 10 consecutive days above 45°C.

Tasmania, where emergency services have been battling bushfires throughout the past month, had its driest ever January. Watkins said Borrona Downs in north-west New South Wales broke the record for hottest minimum temperature, registering one night at 36.6°C. This has a major impact on ecosystems that have not been able to cool down during the night as is normally the case.

Menindee in far-west NSW had four days in a row of temperatures above 47°C. This was the site of December and January's mass fish kills on the Darling River. Hundreds of thousands of native fish, including Murray cod, golden perch and bony bream, died around the Menindee weir.

In parts of western Queensland and western NSW, there have been long strings of more than 40 days of temperatures above 40°C.

Cloncurry had 43 days in a row that exceeded 40°C. Birdsville had 16 days in January of temperatures higher than 45°C including 10 days in a row.

NSW, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and the Northern Territory all had their warmest January on record.

The meteorological agency has warned that temperatures are set to rise further in the years ahead as a result of climate change. In its report last month, it said warming was contributing to a long-term increase in the frequency of extreme heat, fire weather and drought.

"Australia is already experiencing climate change now and there are impacts being experienced or felt across many communities and across many sectors," said Helen Cleugh, the director of the Commonwealth

Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, which collaborated on the report.

The study, which is updated every two years, found that Australia's fire seasons have lengthened – in places by months – and become more severe. From April to October, there has been a broad shift to more arid conditions in south-eastern and south-western Australia. Sea levels have already risen by 20 cm and ocean temperatures are up by 1°C, which is causing acidification – 10 times faster than at any time in the last 300 million years – which has damaged the corals of the Great Barrier Reef.

Climate change inaction costs lives

Decorated Australian firefighter Greg Mullins says climate change is contributing to bushfires so horrendous that homes and lives cannot be protected, and the federal government will not acknowledge the link because it has failed on emissions reduction policy. Fires are a natural phenomenon in the Australian bush, but experts say climate change effects such as heatwaves and changed rainfall patterns mean bushfires are becoming more frequent and extreme.

Mr Mullins said fire seasons "are longer, more severe, and we are getting fires that are much harder to put out".

"What that means ... is, there is simply not enough firefighters and fire trucks to do the job, to protect every structure and protect people's lives," he said.

"It's extremely inconvenient for any government that does not have a cogent answer for what they'll do about climate change, to see the effects of climate change putting more and more people and homes at risk."

Mr Mullins has 50 years of fire fighting experience, including 39 years with Fire and Rescue NSW and as a volunteer in his youth and in retirement. He has been awarded the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal and is an officer of the Order of Australia.

Mr Mullins sought to raise the climate change alarm in public comments in 2006 following fires in the Blue Mountains, but says the then-NSW Labor government told him to "pull your head in".

"They didn't want public servants coming out saying that the climate change driver was pretty obvious to us," he said.

"I feel quite passionately that the word needs to get out about how much the bushfire threat has worsened. I've watched it change, and I've watched our politicians sit on their hands, from both major parties. I don't think either of them really have answers or are doing enough."

Mr Mullins said he was "astounded" that Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Monday addressed the media at Huonville in Tasmania, the epicentre of the state's bushfire crisis, but did not mention addressing climate change.

"He seems like an intelligent person, he can read ... it's a very easy correlation and people in the firefighting business know the links," he said.

Mr Mullins said for the government, climate change was "a policy-free zone so he's got no answers. So obviously you'd avoid it."

In response to Mr Mullins' remarks, a spokesman for Environment Minister Melissa Price said the government

"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

was "contributing to global efforts to reduce emissions".

Speaking in Tasmania, Mr Shorten said while climate change was not responsible for every natural disaster "even the most extreme climate deniers are probably at the point of acknowledging that we are having more and more extreme weather events".

"New weather records are being set and the economic cost is growing ... I think it is legitimate to talk about climate change," he said, calling on the government to act.

A Labor government would reduce carbon emissions by 45 per cent by 2030, based on 2005 levels. The government has pledged to reduce emissions by 26 per cent over the same period, however, the OECD says Australia will miss that target under current policy settings.

Source: Nicole Hasham, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 February 2019

"Astounded": former fire chief unloads on politicians over climate change inaction"

Teenage activist takes School Strikes 4 Climate Action to World Economic Forum

The 16-year-old activist behind the fast-growing *School Strikes 4 Climate Action* took her campaign to the streets of Davos, to confront world leaders and business chiefs about the global emissions crisis.

Greta Thunberg, whose solo protest outside Sweden's parliament has snowballed across the globe, joined a strike by Swiss schoolchildren on the final day of the World Economic Forum.

Having [already addressed the UN Climate Change COP 24 conference](#), Thunberg is rapidly becoming the voice for a generation who are demanding urgent action to slow the rise in global temperatures.

As she travelled to Davos more than 30,000 students were striking in Belgium - Thunberg said the rapid growth of her movement was "incredible".

"There have been climate strikes, involving students and also adults, on every continent except Antarctica. It has involved tens of thousands of children."

Thunberg started her protest by striking for three weeks outside the Swedish parliament, lobbying MPs to comply with the Paris Agreement. After the Swedish election, she continued to strike every Friday, where she is now joined by hundreds of people.

Students around the world have been inspired by Thunberg, with thousands skipping school in Australia in November. Recently there were strikes in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, where more than 20,000 students skipped school.

Missing gym class, geography and religion each Friday is something of a sacrifice for Thunberg, who says she loves school and can't pick a favourite subject.

She's also been forced to give up her hobbies, as climate change activism has taken more of her time.

She's sanguine, though, pointing out that climate activism is much more important: "You have to see the bigger perspective."

Thunberg said she would like more students to join her strike. "That would have a huge impact, but I'm not going to force anyone to do this."

She believes parents should be supportive if their children tell them they're striking on Friday. "Everyone keeps saying that the young people should be more active, and they're so lazy, but once we do something we get criticised."

The world's scientists warned in October that, without a dramatic ramping up of action to cut emissions, global temperatures would rise by more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, with severe consequences for humanity.

Thunberg believes the older generations need to acknowledge that they have failed to protect the environment.

"We need to hold the older generations accountable for the mess they have created, and expect us to live with. It is not fair that we have to pay for what they have caused," she says.

Thunberg has also called on business leaders and politicians to commit to "real and bold climate action", and focus on the "future living conditions of mankind" rather than economic goals and profits.

In [a video address for leaders attending Davos](#) she says: "I ask you to stand on the right side of history. I ask you to pledge to do everything in your power to push your own business or government in line with a 1.5°C world."

Thunberg has been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, which she believes helps her see the problem of climate change clearly.

"My brain works a bit different and so I see things in black and white. Either we start a chain reaction with events beyond our control, or we don't. Either we stop the emissions or we don't. There are no grey areas when it comes to survival."

School strikes in mid January were by far the biggest to date. In Germany, an estimated 30,000 students left their schools in more than 50 cities to protest, carrying banners including: "Why learn without a future?" and "Grandpa, what is a snowman?" One 17-year-old student in Kiel said, "We want to help shape and secure our future so that there will be another world for us to live in in 60 years."

In Belgium, 12,500 students went on strike and plan to strike weekly until the EU elections in May. Some teachers were tolerant of the truancy and said: "Education has to turn youngsters into mature citizens. By their actions, they proved that they are."

School strikes also took place in 15 cities and towns in Switzerland. In Geneva, 12-year-old Selma Joly said: "Frankly, I would rather demand climate action than go to school. Otherwise, years from now, we may no longer be here."

N.B. The links are live and are worth watching.

Source: *Teenage activist takes School Strikes 4 Climate Action to Davos'*

The Guardian, Graeme Wearden and Damian Carrington, 24 Jan 2019



Friday 30th November 2018

1.5T CO₂ for 1.5°C by 2050; Will We Do It?

Have we reached a new epoch in the arguments about anthropogenic climate change? 2019 seems like a year when there will be changes in the political climate which may result in firm political actions being taken to mitigate our climate emissions.

I think a big change in 2018 was COP24 and the media attention given to Greta Thunberg the Swedish Youth Climate Activist who in August 2018 became a prominent figure for starting the first school strike for climate outside the Swedish parliament building, raising awareness of global warming.

Yesterday in The Guardian the article "[The beginning of great Change" Greta Thunberg hails school climate strikes](#)" describes how the 16-year-old's lone protest morphed into a powerful global movement challenging politicians to act. On March 15 there is a [Global School Strike](#) protest.

Last December the YouTube interview on Democracy Now! with Greta Thunberg and Kevin Anderson of the Tyndall Centre for Climate research pulled no punches in declaring that the [World's Richest Must Radically Change Lifestyles to Prevent Global Catastrophe](#). These changes include reducing travel and not travelling by air.



When will we change? In November 2014 George Marshall pointed out in his presentation [Climate Change – The Greatest Story Never Told](#) how most of us recognise that climate change is real, and yet we do nothing to stop it. What is the psychological mechanism that allows us to know something is true but act as if it is not?



*George Marshall,
Co-founder and director, Climate Outreach, Oxford*

I have written a number of articles for the Newsletter looking at my own carbon footprint and also the footprint by country and by country on a per capita basis. A global per capita carbon footprint of 1.5 T CO₂ is required to limit the planet to a 1.5°C increase in global temperature by 2015.

On a per person basis Australians rank tenth highest globally on the [Edgar per capita emissions](#) table at about 17 T CO₂. About 25-30% of our carbon emissions are created at home such as on electricity and gas, the balance is due to other personal consumption expenditure such as on food, household goods, entertainment and transport.

While it is pleasing to see a change in the political climate I wonder how ready we are to voluntarily change our behaviour now to reduce our personal emissions, such as refusing to travel by air.

Peter Maddock

Grow Free Carts come to Benalla!

Grow Free promotes sharing fruit and vegetables using publically located carts where people can drop off or pick up free produce and/or seedlings. The carts have a simple motto:

'Give what you can, take what you need'

Members of the Benalla Local Food Network had seen this [program on the ABC Gardening Australia](#). We all agreed that it would be a fantastic way to share excess produce with our community.

"Grow Free is a grassroots, community building movement which promotes a sustainable culture of growing and sharing healthy food and other resources with our neighbours. Sharing our food abundance nurtures the health and happiness of local communities and the environments in which we live. [Grow Free](#) starts with food, but ends up with community".

The newly formed Benalla Community Garden (at the Uniting Church building) agreed that this could be a good way to distribute excess produce from the garden and share with the community. Waminda Neighbourhood House were also interested as they often have excess produce donated by the community. Benalla Community Health has a garden near the kitchen which often has excess produce with staff members also bring in excess.

What can be shared?

- Home grown fruit, vegetables, herbs, preserves, eggs
- Preferably grown with organic principles
- Seeds, seedlings and cuttings
- Promotion material e.g. recipe booklets, gardening guides (Benalla Grow Your Own materials)

What can't be shared?

- Meat
- Mushrooms
- Compost/scraps
- Selling anything
- Alcohol

Benalla Health will have a cart at the Benalla Ray Sweeney Centre, 45 Coster St., nicknamed the 'Green Machine'. This was an old baby change table that I painted bright green!

Kathryn McQualter



The climate mitigation gap: education and government recommendations miss the most effective individual actions

Seth Wynes and Kimberly A Nicholas
Published 12 July 2017

Environmental Research Letters, Volume 12, Number 7

Abstract

Current anthropogenic climate change is the result of greenhouse gas accumulation in the atmosphere, which records the aggregation of billions of individual decisions. Here we consider a broad range of individual lifestyle choices and calculate their potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries, based on 148 scenarios from 39 sources.

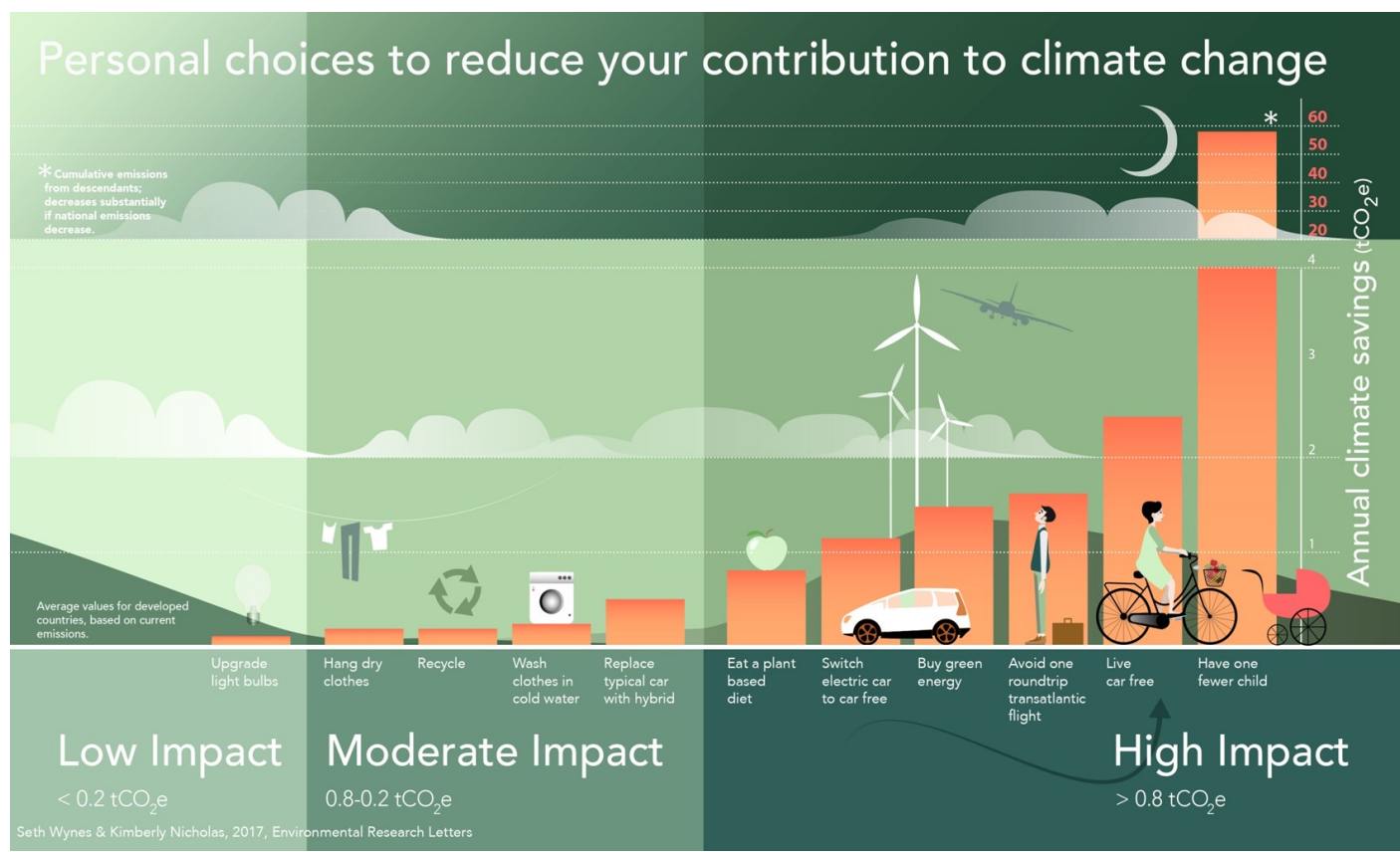
We recommend four widely applicable high-impact (i.e. low emissions) actions with the potential to contribute to systemic change and substantially reduce annual personal emissions:

1. having one fewer child (an average for developed countries of 58.6 tonnes CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e) emission reductions per year),
2. living car-free (2.4 tCO₂e saved per year),
3. avoiding airplane travel (1.6 tCO₂e saved per roundtrip transatlantic flight),
4. and eating a plant-based diet (0.8 tCO₂e saved per year).

These actions have much greater potential to reduce emissions than commonly promoted strategies like comprehensive recycling (four times less effective than a plant-based diet) or changing household lightbulbs (eight times less).

Though adolescents poised to establish lifelong patterns are an important target group for promoting high-impact actions, we find that ten high school science textbooks from Canada largely fail to mention these actions (they account for 4% of their recommended actions), instead focusing on incremental changes with much smaller potential emissions reductions.

Government resources on climate change from the EU, USA, Canada, and Australia also focus recommendations on lower-impact actions. We conclude that there are opportunities to improve existing educational and communication structures to promote the most effective emission-reduction strategies and close this mitigation gap.



Global warming isn't a prediction. It's happening.

Climate change is analogous to Lincoln and slavery or Churchill and Nazism: it's not the kind of thing where you can compromise.

I have been described as the grandfather of climate change. In fact, I am just a grandfather and I do not want my grandchildren to say that grandpa understood what was happening but didn't make it clear.

*James Hansen, Adjunct Professor
Director, Earth Institute, Columbia University*

Changing our diet to save our planet

Over the recent school holidays we had my eight year old granddaughter to stay for her regular school holiday 'sleep over'. As usual we explored things to do and places to go and decided that on her way home a visit to Scienceworks was in order. While there we visited the Planetarium and relaxing in lay back lounge chairs, watched a wonderful animated movie about two humans who had been commissioned to find another planet for us earthlings to live on, given this one is in serious trouble. We visited other planets and moons and couldn't find anything that is a viable alternative to Earth. The answer:

Let's fix the one we have

Of course there are many things we need to do to 'fix it'. Reducing carbon emissions, land clearing and the use of plastics would have to be a good start. What we eat and how we grow it also has a significant impact on our health and the planet we live on. The Western diet, with its [high proportions of red meat](#) and highly refined, processed foods, contributes to a long list of health problems including obesity, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, many types of cancer, mood disorders and dementia. Although we live longer, these conditions contribute to a reduced quality of life for those affected by them and those that care for them. Medical and community support services are required to meet the increased demand, not to mention the urgent need to conduct research into treatments etc. A very costly situation, both socially and economically.

Our diet is not good for the planet either. Agriculture contributes up to 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions and uses 70% of fresh water, while land clearing and industrial farming methods involve large amounts of herbicides and pesticides that pollute our rivers, wetlands and coral reefs.

[A recent report](#) by the EAT-Lancet Commission - *Food in the Anthropocene: Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems* - suggests that we must significantly transform the way we eat and grow our food. Failure to do so will cause an increasing proportion of the global population, expected to hit 10 billion people by 2050, to suffer from malnutrition and preventable disease. Today's children will inherit a planet that has been severely degraded.

To address this situation, one which is defined as a crisis in the report, we need to cut our red meat intake by more than half. Our main source of protein needs to be plant based, 35% of our calories should come from whole grains and our intake of legumes, nuts, vegetables and fruit should double. While achieving this will take considerable change in our behaviour, there are few immediate steps we can take. Limiting our red meat meals to two per week, ensuring our lunches are meat free, enjoying fruit and nuts for snacks and exploring alternatives to meat for some of our main meals are just a start. More information on how we might change our diet for both health and environmental reasons [is available at ABC News](#).

While these measures will go some way to addressing our per capita dietary environmental foot print, one of the largest in the world, they are also consistent with *Goal 2: Zero Hunger* of the United Nations *Sustainable Development Goals* and *The Paris Agreement on Climate Change*.

Perhaps we could not only be a healthier nation but also one that demonstrates responsibility as a global citizen. We could then focus on preserving our planet and not have to go looking to the skies for a new home.

Freida Andrews

There's No Life in a Dead River

Early in January we were alerted to what has been described as one of the largest fish kills ever recorded.

On 9th January 2019, an estimated 1 million dead fish, including the critically endangered Murray Cod, were found lying in the Darling River near Menindee. It was testament to the fact that something was going very wrong. While the current drought has certainly impacted flows in the river, the repeated draining of the Menindee Lakes is also a significant factor in what can only be referred to as a 'devastating ecological disaster'.

The reports kept coming.

A second event occurred later in January with further hundreds of thousands of fish perishing. These included Murray Cod who were thought to be 100 years old as well as large river mussels and the iconic Rakali, Australia's version of the otter. While the mechanism of how the fish actually died does involve sudden drops in temperature, reduction in blue-green algae and low oxygen levels in the water, the situation could not have arisen without the lack of fresh river flows. Locals, scientists and government officials all predicted further fish kills in a range of locations.

We are warned that unless we allow flows to resume in the Darling River, we're in danger of seeing one of the worst environmental catastrophes in Australia.

Ecological evidence shows the Barwon-Darling River is not meant to dry out to disconnected pools – even during drought conditions. Photographic evidence of puddles in the bed of the Darling is freely available. Water diversions have disrupted the natural balance of wetlands that support massive ecosystems.

While high flows will still make it through the Barwon-Darling, filling the floodplains and wetlands, and connecting to the River Murray, the low and medium flow events have disappeared. Instead, these are captured in the upper sections of the basin in artificial water storages and used in irrigation.

In the aftermath of these events a call was made by Labor leader, Bill Shorten for a study to be conducted by a multidisciplinary panel of experts from *The Australian Academy of Science*.

The study is expected to summarise existing research and to ascertain if water diversions and/or management have caused or exacerbated the scale of the current disaster. Mr Shorten also asked for information regarding how the use of chemicals and fertilizers may have contributed to this event. The study was due for completion by February 10.

The report of the *South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission* has also provided information which will have a bearing on investigations into the tragic fish kills that have occurred on the Darling River and elsewhere.

Among its findings the report calls for a complete overhaul of the Murray-Darling Basin scheme, including the reallocation of more water from irrigation to the environment. The royal commission found that the original plan ignored the potentially catastrophic risks associated with climate change. These risks include prolonged and severe drought.

The royal commission also found that the approach taken by the government to developing and implementing the plan prioritises social and economic factors above those that science has found to be necessary for the recovery of environmental flows. Political considerations appeared to have outweighed the action required to save the Murray Darling Basin.

While irrigators, townships and others who draw water from these rivers are calling for more water and putting forward the view that they cannot afford to give more water back to the environment, we can only hope that a resolution can be reached which ensures that our largest river system not only survives but returns to be a healthy productive part of our future.

After all –

**There is no life in a Dead River
– Not for anyone.**

Freida Andrews

Sources:

MP's blamed for massive fish kill:

Michael Koziol, The Age, January 10, 2019

Darling fish kill strikes again at Menindee:

Peter Hannam, The Age, January 29, 2019

The Darling River is simply not supposed to dry out, even in drought:

Fran Sheldon, [The Conversation, January 16, 2019](#)

Scientists to study Darling fish kill:

Peter Hannam, The Age, January 21, 2019

Murray-Darling basin royal commission report finds gross maladministration:

Anne Davies, The Guardian, January 31, 2019



Christmas up in Smoke

Here's a thought for those at Christmas
For those who've lost their home
Those who saw their paddocks kindle
Crops wither, into black, charred, loam.

Share their anguish for kennelled sheep dogs
Seared vegies, orchard, trees, splitting boughs,
Reflect on burnt damaged tools, sheds, machinery
And helpless, feathered, fluttering fowls.

In the mud of a dam lie sizzled frogs,
But share their horror
As wind hurls flames at the homestead,
Ignites dear old welcoming verandah posts,
Gulps a nest of baby wrens.
Bursts inside with a whoosh of triumph,
Warping, buckling corrugated roofing
Shattering glass, consuming table, chairs
Beds bedding, clothes, crisping toys in cupboards.

Participate in their despair
As Dad's desk burns and computer implodes.
Grieve as the television on Granny's buffet
Gargles into silence, vomits tangled wires, and,
Topples, into a greedy, blazing, conflagration;
Flames licking, charring, precious pine flooring,
Engorged by the crash of falling rafters.

Carelessly bypassing a trellised corner,
Shrivelled budding grapes and leaves entwined,
A wall of flame, impelled by gale-force thrust,
Leaps the creek, devours wattles, scrub,
Eucalypts left uncleared on the hill,
Tops the summit with a primordial roar
As tempestuous gusts fuel it over and downward,
To wreak havoc in the valley below.

Aftermath. A blackened, smoking landscape.
Though one enduring, human, symbol
Still remains;
A scorched chimney waits for Santa,
And the rains.

Jennifer Hearn

The Age 5/2/2019

My Country (now)

I love a sunburnt country
A land of sweeping plains...
Of redirected water flows
For cotton growers' gains



I love her monsoon downpours
Her cyclones storms and floods
Unprecedented torrents of
Humanity and mud



(with apologies to Dorothea Mackellar)



I love her record temperatures
Bushfires and drought extremes
Of erosion and land clearing
For agricultural dreams



I love her staunch denial
In the face of climate science
Our leadership against the world
In obstinate defiance.

Wilcox

BSFG Newsletter Survey

Last October, at a BSFG Committee Meeting, we decided to review the publication of the BSFG Newsletter. As you would be aware, considerable time is required to collect articles, format and publish the newsletter. There are currently four publications per year. At this point I would like to say thankyou to Ian Herbert for his tremendous commitment in putting the newsletter together, and to the members who contribute articles.

In order to ascertain what members would like and expect in the newsletter, we conducted a survey. The following information and percentages relate to the paid financial members of whom 30% responded.

The compiled results are as follows:

- 100% of respondents wanted to receive a newsletter
- 50% read every newsletter
- Of those who read the newsletter, 58% read all articles.

Main reasons given for not reading the newsletter were time constraints and that some members only read the articles that interest them.

The preferred number of pages was four to six. Some thought it should depended entirely on number of articles submitted.

58% wanted to receive the newsletter quarterly. Again some thought that should depend on amount of content.

Another suggestion was that perhaps only two or three special editions throughout the year be emailed out, and other articles of relevance as they appear.

Topics of interest

- Climate change and related topics such as sustainable housing and renewable energy etc.
- Limits to growth
- Population
- Air water and soil pollution
- Waste management
- Natural environment /biodiversity
- Permaculture
- Local activities and initiatives -practical ways to contribute, updates
- Stories of what others are doing and achieving
- Links to other resources, new stuff

Most members wanted to see articles on action group reports, editorial comment, local issues and relevant links to topical articles.

Many also thought a cartoon would be a good addition.

Improvements

- Fewer newsletters eg. two per year with short sharp key messages with photos
- More contributions from members
- As there are many opportunities to keep abreast with what you are interested in through media , it is of more interest to see what is happening locally
- More photos
- Make it the pick of the website discussions and content

Member's contribution to the newsletter

- 63% of respondents indicated they would contribute to the newsletter occasionally
- 25% said they contribute regularly

Other comments

The newsletter could be left at other venues around Benalla e.g. TAFE and Library. 'Preaching to the converted' comes to mind - how can we reach the unconverted?

Thankyou to the members who submitted their thoughts and completed the questionnaire. Although we would have liked to have heard from more of our members, the information was thoughtful and relevant.

My thoughts

Overall members were very happy with the content and delivery of the newsletter. Members cited climate change and related issues as very important for inclusion in the newsletter. There was a strong emphasis for wanting articles on local action, initiatives, outcomes and photos. In response to many of the questions, this topic found its way into the member's responses.

Christine Holmes

on behalf of the BSFG Committee



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**Deadline for June
Newsletter
Sunday 19th May**



**Benalla
Sustainable
Future
Group**

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