

**"Is incremental adaptive change enough or ought we embark on radical transformation of our economy and our governance to combat the climate change threat?"**

**If so, how can we begin?"**

**by**

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## Overview

Humanity faces a difficult century and a particularly challenging decade.

Radical transformative change in the way humans live and organize their activities is now apparently the only sensible response to the huge threats that loom for our near descendants.

The combination of human overpopulation, destruction of essential supportive ecosystems, climate change induced by carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions and a flawed and unstable economic system, together point to the strong likelihood that the human response to these issues during the next one or two decades will determine whether or not Planet Earth can continue to provide a viable home for humans.

Paul Gilding has presented in his recent book "The Great Disruption" an optimistic scenario for how humans can survive and even prosper in the face of the coming disruption. His thinking accords closely with the work of a group with which I have been associated - Transform Australia - that has been meeting for the past 15 months, beginning with a three-day intensive workshop in Sydney in March 2010.

We agree with Gilding that nothing short of a major change in the human mindset and in the operation of some of the key systems, which drive modern society (including especially the economic and governance systems) will be enough to make Australia and the world resilient to the shocks that lie ahead.

Two shifts in our mindset will need to underpin this transformative change. The first is a systems approach to understanding the way our world operates. The second is a recalibration of what Riane Eisler describes as the dominator/partnering continuum in a direction that rewards caring, sharing, nurturing, collaborating and partnering instead of a system that rewards winning, competing, possessing, dominating and controlling.

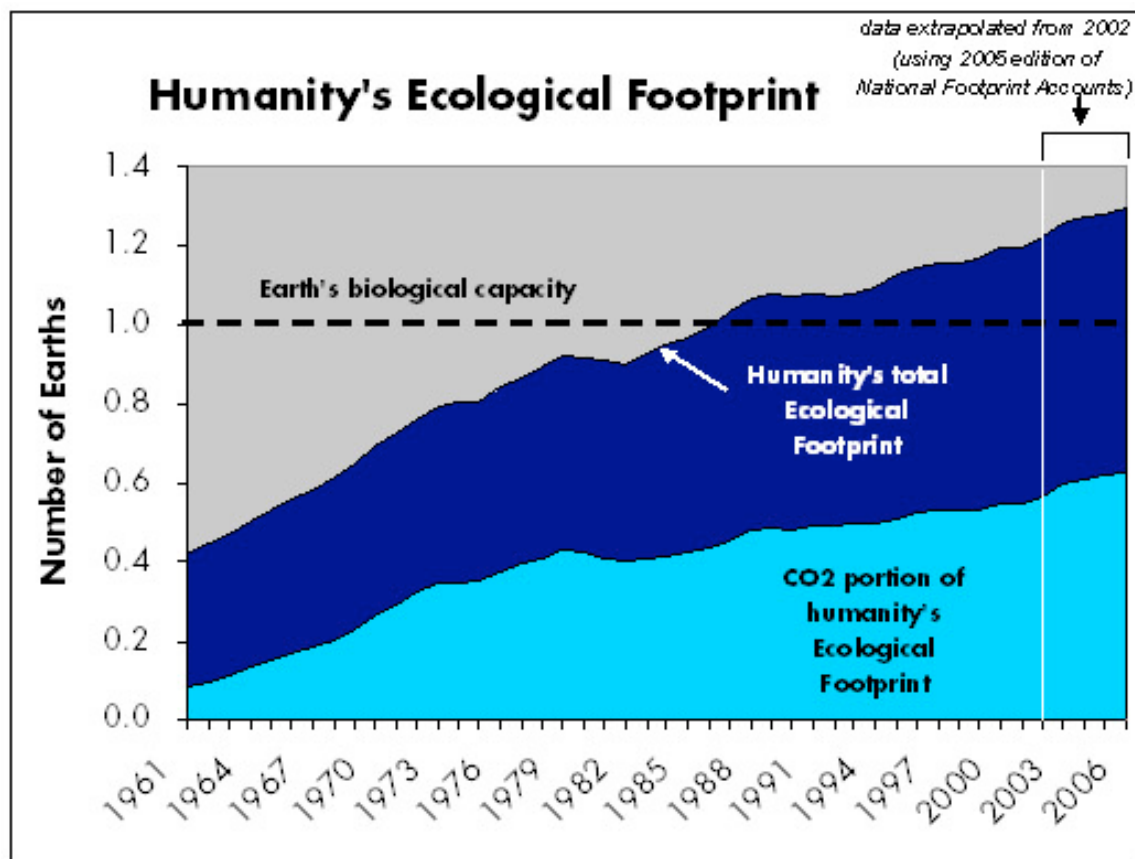
The notion that economic growth that is dependant on consumption can continue as the driving force for human progress is no longer tenable. The challenge for the Transform Australia movement is to empower 2 ½ million Australians with a vision of how things can be different and how we can work together to make a different system emerge. When the population "tipping point" is reached in favor of economic and governance systems that truly serve the needs of people and the environment, rather than the needs of what David Korten describes as the "phantom" money system, we are much more likely to transform towards a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

## 1. Limits to population and economic growth

The earth has a finite capacity and humans have now exceeded it.

A combination of exponential growth in both human numbers and the human economy is now hitting the wall imposed by physics, chemistry and biology. The quadrupling of the human population during the past hundred years, associated with our consumerist lifestyle and insatiable demand for more food, fresh water, resources and space, has now resulted in a demand for biologically active land and water that now exceeds the available supply by about 50%. (Growth has continued beyond the data shown in the striking graph below)

**Figure 1 Humanity's Ecological Footprint up to 2006**



The complex systems, which enable Earth to adjust to demands made upon it are no longer able to handle the waste products of the activities of 7 billion humans and we have exceeded a number of critical boundaries. Swedish researcher, Johan Rockstrom illustrates in this graphic 9 minute youtube presentation, the consequences of continuing with "business as usual": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgqtrlixYR4>. Yet, both the number of humans and the economic demands by each new individual on the earth's finite resources are continuing to rise. (Rockstrom 2010)

We are entering an era that was confidently predicted (and brushed aside) in earlier times by Thomas Malthus (1798), Paul Ehrlich (1968) and The Club of Rome in its

“Limits to Growth”. (1972) Neither the expansion in human numbers, nor the expansion in the demands which each individual makes upon the human economy are currently being constrained by our human systems, which are frankly incapable of addressing them without transformative change in the way they operate.

Human innovation has served us wonderfully well through the green revolution to expand food production. Myriad technical advances have got us this far. But we have reached this point with assistance from a seemingly inexhaustible supply of fossil fuel based energy, which comes at the cost of carbon pollution and heating of the planet. This is in turn, compounding the shortages of food, water and productive land. Revolutions in transportation, communication, trade and management have now made the human population of the world highly interdependent and most of the problems we now confront are partly global in scale and origin.

The world economy is managed by elite members of affluent countries in their own interests. (Korten 2010) It is built around money rather than the needs of people and the environment. The management of the money system has led to the gap between rich and poor increasing dramatically, both within and across national borders. (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) Conflicts and civil wars between the haves and the have-nots and between the overfed and the starving are increasing.

## **2. The crisis is upon us**

The signs of an impending and inevitable crisis are emerging as we cross the boundaries of sustainability. The signs include extreme weather events, melting ice caps, thinning sea ice and social chaos in large areas of the world, as those who have been deprived of a fair share of the worlds resources, face the prospect of starvation and mind numbing impoverishment.

Paul Gilding (2011) likens the widespread denial of the significance of this gathering storm to the period prior to the second world war when the populations of Britain and America refused to recognize the seriousness of the threats posed by Germany and Japan. The invasion of Poland triggered British resolve and the bombing of Pearl Harbor transformed overnight, the culture and economy of the United States to a wartime footing. Within weeks, the car industry was producing tanks and all assumptions that had driven the economy were on hold. Gilding says that humans are slow but not stupid and that there will be a trigger point for transformative actions in our response to the constellation of interlinked issues, which are now bearing in upon us.

Hopefully a not too disastrous trigger point will occur soon. In the meantime we need to prepare our country for the kind of changes to our social and economic systems that will give our descendants a fighting chance to survive and prosper. (Cork, Australia 21, 2010)

## **3. Human mindset and a systems approach**

**The human mindset** is determined by our values and beliefs. It includes beliefs about who we are and what we can do. Contrary to what many believe, the mindset can be changed.

While people with a fixed mindset tend to believe that their personal traits are immutable, people with a growth mindset understand that these qualities are something that can be developed through dedication and effort. A growth mindset enables people to thrive during some of the most challenging times of their lives. Carol Dweck (2006) presents the evidence that effective practice of mindset change from fixed mode to growth mode, creates new neural pathways in the brain and allows people to be more effective in the ways they adapt to challenge. We do not yet know the limits of the human mindset to grow and adapt to adversity. We can be very confident however, that it will be stretched in coming decades and that in preparation for the changes ahead, we should assist people to move from a fixed to a growth mindset.

**Systems thinking** involves understanding that the world is made up of billions of interconnecting, complex and constantly adapting systems that depend for their function on operational feedback loops and connections with other complex systems above, below and around them. Our human world is made up, not only of complex systems in nature (such as the climate system) but also of man-made complex systems (such as the economic system). The man-made systems are interacting with the natural systems and with each other and depend for their continuing function on the continuing operations of other systems.

Systems thinking helps us to see the world, not as a machine with lots of separate independent parts, but as a dynamic interconnected and intertwined set of systems that have feedback relationships and depend on other systems for their operation. The human economic system depends fundamentally on nature's economic systems but the economic system is designed to operate as though nature's systems are unimportant.

A **resilient system** is one that can continue to maintain its central function in the face of external shocks. Although, for many shocks, most system can adapt and continue to function, sometimes the shock can be so great that it forces the system into a new functional state to which it is now transformed. At this point there is no going back. The scientific community is fully aware of the complexity of the systems we are dealing with in nature and deeply concerned at the catastrophic systemic effects that are likely to follow as we push the boundaries of key natural systems beyond their operating limits. But for many people there is a tendency to think of change in a linear fashion, and that if we push things beyond their comfort zone, we can always draw back and they will recover.

Transformation involves a new working state with new functions and new operating factors. It also carries with it, implications for the operation of the systems below, above and around it. An understanding of the complexity and interdependence of system function is not at present embedded in the Australian mindset. It was not part of the education of the baby boomer generation and it has been noticeably absent from the national "debate" about climate change and the economy.

I am arguing here that we humans must, as a matter of urgency, restructure a number of our man-made economic and governance systems in order to make them resilient to the

shocks that undoubtedly lie ahead. To do this we will need broader understanding of the way these systems interact and transform.

#### **4. Why would we change?**

It now seems certain that in the long run we will have no alternative. Change will be forced upon humanity by an environment that is already transformed by human actions. A change in the human mindset and adoption of systems thinking may help us to cope better when inevitable shocks arrive and before apocalyptic environmental change makes human civilization untenable.

Globally, many thinkers and groups are actively working towards recasting the framework for our future economy. David Korten (2010) has written an important book, entitled “Agenda for a New Economy: From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth”. A sample of Korten’s thinking can be gauged from his outstanding 50 minute YouTube video at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdsZ\\_ILz07Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdsZ_ILz07Q)

Riane Eisler (2007) in her book “The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economy,” argues that the modern human economy needs to be altered in its purposes, structures, processes and outcomes. Eisler’s seminal contribution is her presentation of the need to change the human mindset from what she calls the *dominator model* to a *caring and partnering model*. For much of human history and across the world, men have taken for granted and devalued contributions that nurturing and caring make to successful societies. Because the nurturing and caring role was, in the past, largely a female function and because masculine activities such as fighting competing and winning were seen to be absolutely central to human survival, caring and nurturing were, and still remain, “soft” activities by contrast with “hard” objects like guns, tanks and computers. Throughout history, both partnering and dominator ideology have been present in all societies but some have assigned much greater economic weight and value to the caring, nurturing, sharing and partnering role. Building caring for people and the environment into our human economy is Eisler’s mission. It has been firmly adopted by the Transform Australia group as a central element of the transformation needed in Australia’s economy.

Korten and Eisler have identified issues that are absolutely central to the human enterprise and which modern economic systems currently devalue or ignore. Gilding also presents a powerful argument for human economic systems in affluent countries like our own to abandon consumerist economic growth, building instead on economic activity, which enriches human experience and relationships.

#### **5. Placing community at the centre of Australia’s governance system**

While the transformation must focus particularly on the economy, there is a need also to reconsider the way Australian democracy operates. State-based representative democracy is the current international benchmark for governance, but its current operation is failing Australia in a globalized, media driven world. One deep concern is the extent to which privileged insiders, especially those who have helped to finance political parties, have the ear of policymakers and can push their preferred policies to ministers behind closed doors. The power of the articulate corporations often outruns the public good. There is a strong case to be made for abolishing all gifts to political parties, with the electoral process being funded entirely from the public purse.

**Subsidiarity** describes a principle that is a desirable attribute of governance in Australia. It has been endorsed as a key principle of governance by the European Union.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/1\\_2\\_2\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/1_2_2_en.htm)

The principle states that policies and responsibilities should be left with the lowest level of government practicable. Such a system means there is greater local input into decision-making and that communities can customize policies and services to suit local preferences. Decision-making in Australian democracy tends to be through a hierarchical bureaucracy with many lines of responsibility leading to an individual at the top of the structure. This is compounded by the fact that there are often multiple layers of government from regional, state and federal levels. These are not necessarily pulling in the same direction. The result is that minor decisions often have to go through several layers, and obstruction or delay can occur at any point. The principle of subsidiarity seeks to circumvent this problem by promoting governance that empowers local decision makers and enables communities to be engaged in devising, implementing and evaluating policy.

**Participatory democracy** is a growing movement, which seeks to involve a broad cross section of the community in consideration of the issues and policies that will affect their lives. A number of approaches have been used. They include the assembling of a “citizens parliament” or a “citizens jury” to consider specific policy topics or to make recommendations on policy responses to specific problems. Participation can also be extended to special focus groups and surveys as well as the use of the Internet to undertake local plebiscites on contentious questions.

There have been sporadic trials of these methods in Australia. The focus group approach is heavily used by political parties in the lead up to, and during elections. During the recent Federal election, the current Prime Minister proposed a citizens’ parliament as an approach to the solution of the climate change policy problem. Her proposal has since been dropped in favor of a cross party committee of parliamentarians, assisted by a group of experts to develop legislation for a carbon price in Australia. The idea did not attract electoral support as it was perceived as a stalling tactic on an issue on which many felt they had already declared their preferences at the ballot box.

We need to develop improved ways of empowering ordinary people to take adaptive and mitigating action against the gathering storm. These changes will not happen through leadership by the present power structure. They will only happen when the people around Australia and around the world become better informed about the problems and potential solutions and the need for a change in direction.

There are numerous examples of mass movements of people, changing history. Dramatic changes brought about by people power are now in train in the Middle East. The fall of the Berlin wall that preceded the decline in Russian Communism was a manifestation of people power. So too was the removal of Ferdinand Marcos as dictator of the Philippines. These were extraordinary political changes. The feminist movement, with its huge number of self-organized groups and workshops, is an example of a deep change movement that has transformed our national mindset and consciousness.

## **6. A challenge to our spirituality as well as our creativity**

Considering questions about the future of the human species challenges not only our intellects but also our spirits. Spirituality is about how we see ourselves connected to the universe and to those around us and gives meaning to our existence. Humans are a tiny subset of life on a tiny fragment of the universe and we have inhabited the planet for less than one four-thousandth of the Earth's existence.

But we are also rational beings capable of extraordinary innovation and insights. We now understand the dimensions of the predicament that threatens our survival as a species. We have everything to gain by being positive and creative. We need to harness our best minds and the will of the people to rethink the structures and processes that will enable us to respond quickly both as a nation and as a human world to the gathering storm.

We have no time to lose in acting to reduce carbon emissions, restore ecosystems, reduce the growth in human populations and make the world a more equal place. We cannot turn back the clock on globalisation, but we can rapidly make planetary society more resilient. We cannot now prevent the effects of some climate change.

But if we begin now, we can probably still avoid the worst effects of runaway global heating. The problem is not that we don't know what to do but that we have not yet summoned the political will to do it. The good news is that millions of people around the world are now committed to moving down a new road towards a sustainable global human society.

Above all we need a reorientation in the human relationship to the natural world and to the way humans think and plan economically. The human economy is a subset of nature's economy and cannot survive in the long term if nature's economy is compromised. A starting point will be the recognition that the current state of human affairs is unsustainable and that there is an alternative approach, which offers discernible benefits in the short term and sustainability in the longer term.

An important prerequisite to mindset change relates to the concept of self-efficacy. Believing that we can successfully do something is a powerful motivator in enabling us to do it.

## **8. Promoting Transformative Change**

Conventional economic thinking permeates our modern culture and dominates the modern mindset. The community lives within the constraints imposed by the economy and accepts with little question the system that treats individuals as customers whose role is to make market choices. Under the subtle influence of mass advertising, our wants are distorted and manipulated. We are encouraged to compete with our friends and colleagues to outdo each other in material possessions. Yet the economy pays quite inadequate attention to the environment on which our entire livelihood and lives depend.

We can begin by insisting that the economy is our servant, not our master and that we need to change it in ways that meet human and environmental needs rather than to create them. If we fail to value the environment in our economy and most people remain

unaware of the damage we are doing to it, it is inevitable that the damage will continue unabated. Also, if as a nation we continue in the apparent belief that our responsibility ends at our national border and that we have little or no responsibility for the poor of the world, we will continue to get richer and they will continue to get poorer.

So we must together engineer a change in thinking about the role of the economy in our lives. Until the community makes this shift, our politicians will not have the motivation or courage to do so. I think that understanding that we need such a shift is the biggest challenge to our Australian world, where most people are relatively content with the way things are and do not recognize the seriousness of the threats to the future of our species.

Malcolm Gladwell (2000) has written an entertaining book about how changes in the way populations think about the world develop. He describes in some detail, the factors which lead communities and groups to a "tipping point" when they are influenced by new ideas or actions and now see the world through different eyes and behave in new ways. He goes on to point out that change can occur quite quickly as a result of a relatively small proportion of the population accepting the validity of the new idea or embracing the new fashion. The figure may be as low as 20% of the population being enough to effect quite dramatic changes in behavior of the majority. What particularly matters according to Gladwell is the "stickiness" or attractiveness of the idea and the personal characteristics of the people who are involved in promoting and disseminating it.

The good news is that we are probably in striking distance of a global tipping point where conventional wisdom about the current adequacy of a number of our human systems including especially our economic system will be rejected and we will transform to a new model. We are fully capable of developing a new approach that is more attuned to the limitations that the environment is placing on us. The tipping point could occur as a result of the determined actions of less than a quarter of the population.

## **9. Signs of hope**

We can be confident that the world in 2020 will differ markedly from the world of 2011. We could be on the verge of an exciting adventure in people power. Everyone can play a part in this challenge and everyone can reap the benefit of a more caring, more just and more sustainable world.

Never before have we had the insights, capacities and opportunities that now present to us. Either we can shrug our shoulders and walk away from the challenges, leaving the problems to get worse, or we can mount an unprecedented program of systemic change in our local regional, national and globalised world that is driven by a new community commitment to caring for people and the planet and is directed by a change in our mindset about the future.

The starting point for this change must be heightened awareness across society that incremental adaptive change is not likely to be sufficient to avert catastrophic change during the lives of our children and grandchildren. Our concern for their future and their own interest in it are powerful motivational forces that need to be harnessed to the transformative process. The global financial crisis has waned but not disappeared and it

seems unlikely that the band-aids applied to it in the past two years will avoid further economic shocks. It will take such shocks for the world to agree that we must go back to the economic drawing board.

Having spent much of the past 10 years contemplating the nature of the storms ahead, I am convinced that humans have the ability to take action that will greatly improve our chances of coming out positively on the other side. I think that it is neither too late nor too difficult for us to mount an effective response.

But I think we need to reorder the words in Bill Clinton's catchphrase "It's the economy, stupid!" to read "It's the stupid economy!" The modern stupid economy is ignoring caring for people and the environment and is predicated on an utterly distorted view of what is needed to promote human wellbeing.

The central aim of the new economy in our future world must be the wellbeing of the entire human family and the wellbeing of the planet and all its non-human inhabitants. That is the positive vision that underpins the vision painted by David Korten in his book outlining a new human economy. Of course there continue to be many who insist that humans are basically selfish and grasping individuals who care only for their own future. It is that view of humans that drives the modern stupid economy and amplifies many of the worst aspects of human behavior. (Korten 2009)

But there good evidence that humans are much more than this and that we are capable of quite extraordinary caring, innovation and selflessness. In fact it is those activities upon which we must rebuild our economic future and which have been shown to generate greatest human satisfactions.

[http://awarenessmag.com/mayjun2/MJ2\\_RIANE.HTML](http://awarenessmag.com/mayjun2/MJ2_RIANE.HTML)

## **10. Changing the narrative and building momentum for change.**

The transformative task needs to build from the momentum of diverse activities aimed at a sustainable future that are already under way in schools, NGOs, faith and community groups around the nation. Mapping this capacity and welding it into coherent coalition for transformative change will require a combination of sophisticated IT capacity and new resources of both paid and voluntary effort.

We humans tend to live our stories and our dreams and our mindsets depend upon them. If we are to change the human mindset in ways that will make us resilient to the uncertainties ahead, we will need to modify the values and dreams that dominate modern Australian culture. I am suggesting here, eight "dream changes", which could help to make us more resilient and help prepare us for the future.

- First the old dream "I am the king of the castle and he is the dirty rascal" gives way to the new dream "I share the world with all humans and other living things."
- The old dream that "Competing and winning is what makes for a great world (for some)" gives way to a new dream that "Caring for people and the environment is what makes for a better world (for all)."
- The old dream that "Owning things makes us feel good" gives way to the new dream that "Sharing things makes us feel even better".

- The old dream that "Bigger and more are best," gives way to a new dream that "Small and manageable are better still".
- The old dream that "Money can buy anything I need" gives way to the new dream that "Love, joy, peace and security can be found through caring relationships."
- The old dream that "Humans can do anything they set their minds to do" gives way to the new dream that "We are now setting our minds to live really well within the constraints of the planet".
- The old dream that "Growing the economy is what makes for a better world" gives way to the new dream that "The economy is our servant not our master and that economic growth at the expense of the environment is unacceptable. "
- The old dream that "The whole earth is here for humans to exploit," gives way to the new dream that "Humans depend on nature to nourish and sustain us ".

We need to explore ways and means of introducing new dreams and narratives of this kind into the national psyche by whatever means possible. It is that kind of radical transformative change that could make us more resilient. I think we must confront the marketers of the old dreams and trump them with dreams that are both more attractive and contribute to a more sustainable future.

## 11. Taking Action

Transform Australia (TA) is a new, expanding, somewhat disorganized network of individuals who have been working together in small groups since a Sydney design workshop in March 2010, exploring what will be needed to achieve a viable future for Australia and Australians. The group now has a website. [www.transform-australia.net](http://www.transform-australia.net) and has developed a manifesto that is reproduced below

Members of the Transform Australia Group have concluded that the practical challenge is to find ways to engage about 2 ½ million Australians in discussion of these matters. According to Gladwell's tipping point hypothesis, if that number of Australians reach the firm conclusion that a change in direction is needed, it is likely that the nation will begin to move in the new direction. One suggestion has been that we need an operational TA headquarters in every Australian community with an operations room that visually represents the challenge of living sustainably with nature and documents progress in the local community in this endeavor.

A number of strategies are being tested. These include roundtables of opinion leaders, mentoring of thought leaders and introduction of transformation thinking into training and management courses. Some of the issues about system and mindset change are also being introduced into curriculum materials for schoolchildren in a pilot project involving 23 schools in Canberra. (Douglas 2011)

The main steps in developing a national change in mindset can perhaps best be comprehended in a series of questions, which all Australians should be encouraged to consider.

1. In view of the evidence that the planet is already de-compensating under the pressure of the current population and its standard of living, what is the feasibility that we can keep on with a "business as usual" approach as the world population continues to grow

and as everyone in the world continues to aspire to a greater and greater material standard of living?

2. What is the purpose of the human economy? Why do we tolerate the fact that it controls our lives, manipulates our needs and contributes to world inequity and environmental destruction rather than serve the real needs of all people and the health of the planet? Why do we persist in placing competition ahead of collaboration in the operation of the economy and in our daily lives when collaboration makes us feel better than winning or losing?

3. How well is our current democracy serving the needs of people and the planet and to what extent is it being corrupted by special pleading and special interests, which are antithetical to public good? How can we exert greater local control over the issues, which impact on our daily lives?

4. In redesigning our local, regional, national and international economies how can we best preserve and promote our natural ecosystems and the well-being of our entire society.

5. How do our parliamentary representatives respond to these questions when we discuss them with them and repeatedly tell them that these are the question we want answered?

## **12. The Transform Australia Manifesto**

### ***Our Vision:***

Our Vision is for a transformed Australia where:

- The well-being of all humans and the health of the planet are synonymous
- We accept that nature is our provider and we are its stewards
- We acknowledge that our economy, ecology and ecosystem are intra-dependent
- A sustainable future for our descendants exists

### ***Our Mission:***

Our Mission is to transform the mindsets of Australians in order to bring about whole system change. We will achieve this by:

- Providing educational opportunities for more Australians to understand systems thinking, the reasons for system change and the actions needed and the many levels at which change needs to happen
- Advocating for system change across all elements of Australian society
- Empowering and galvanising Australians to create system change by developing a practical range of general and specific opportunities and projects to work on together
- Collaborating with other like-minded individuals, organisations and networks to multiply the effect of our actions and bring about change as soon as possible
- Developing new knowledge and applying existing knowledge to inform our decisions, to support our actions and guide our priorities

### ***Our Values:***

- We care passionately about the future of our planet.

- We are committed to real and lasting change in our world.
- We hold our leaders and ourselves accountable for generating essential change.
- We believe that justice, equity and empathy are vital for communities to thrive.
- We approach our lives and our work with audacity and courage.
- We recognise the vital importance of our own custodianship of children and the planet.
- We create respectful, empowering and collaborative partnerships in all that we do.

### ***The Manifesto***

Australia is at a fork in the road. Humans everywhere now face a constellation of wickedly complex problems, including climate change, the instability of the global economic system, continuing world population growth, massive ecosystem extinction and huge inequities in the distribution of food, water and other global resources.

We can either choose to continue down the road of “business as usual”, or we can embark down a new road that involves a radical shift in the national mindset, and a change in the way the whole system in which we live, works.

We know that the “business as usual” route is not sustainable and will harm our descendants the welfare of other species and the biosphere that nurtures us all.

The new road leads to whole system change and will help make us resilient to the factors that are hurtling us towards the collapse of human civilisation. This road will ultimately lead to a profound transformation in the fabric of Australian society, including our culture, governance, economy, political system and the way we live our lives. It offers our descendants their best hope of a prosperous and viable future.

Currently, Transform Australia is a loose and evolving network of diverse individuals, committed to promoting a mindset shift that will lead to Australia becoming ecologically sustainable and socially healthy.

We want to work with other people and with ethically aligned organisations, to develop a national movement that will inspire, engage and harness the energies of a critical mass of Australians, building especially on the “fierce compassion” that all parents feel for their children. When at least 2 million people Australians are involved, a transformational “tipping point” is likely to occur.

The mindset change that we advocate will include the following:

- Placing the well-being of all humans and the health of the planet and its myriad ecosystems as the foremost priorities of redesigned economic and social systems.
- Recognising the absolute dependency of humans on a flourishing and intact web of ecosystem services and building their economic value into our economy
- Recognising the finite supply of earth’s resources to support the human population and the need to drastically shrink Australia’s carbon and ecological footprints.
- Effecting whole system shift away from the winning-losing-control-dominator mindset, towards greater emphasis on a partnering-caring-sharing-nurturing-empathy-respect mindset.
- Developing a new style of education that moves the emphasis from obedience and compliance to respectful collaboration between teachers and their students.
- Developing new collaborative ways to make decisions at all levels of society from the family to the boardroom and the cabinet.
- Harnessing, economically valuing and including the “maternal” attributes of caring, empathy, nurturing, sharing and collaboration in the new economy and its flow-over into the way businesses and institutions are managed.
- Paying serious attention to global and regional human equity and justice.
- Changing the emphasis from owning things and the status accorded by possessions

- to the priority of services and relationships as generators of human wellbeing.
- Developing new indicators to reflect the accomplishment of the economy in addressing these new emphases.

Transform Australia will provide a platform and support for activists to initiate independent and collegial action in their efforts to contribute to the whole system change outlined above. Specifically it will:

- Develop opportunities and projects for Australians to work together on defining, adopting and promoting elements of the new mindset and the structural and functional changes which follow from it.
- Provide educational opportunities for people to understand the reason for system change and the actions needed to make it happen.
- Provide a forum to find commonality through shared intent for positive change, discuss ways of engineering system change and as a result raise our sense of urgency for change
- Help to build political and intellectual momentum for system change across all elements of Australian society.

We are at the beginning of an exciting journey. The road we are taking is not well charted or defined and there will be multiple obstacles on the way. But the destination is a sustainable future for our descendants.

### **13. On Persistence by Calvin Coolidge**

This quote on persistence comes from Calvin Coolidge a former President of the United States. It hung on my office wall throughout much of my academic career where my research students could see it and absorb it.

*Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.  
Talent will not: nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.  
Genius will not: unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.  
Education will not: the world is full of educated derelicts.  
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent  
The slogan, "press on" has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.*

### **14. Self Efficacy (Anonymous)**

Another very important attribute we will need in the next decade is self-efficacy. The psychologists repeatedly tell us that believing that we can rise to new heights is a very important part of dealing with adversity.

I found this little poem in a Silly Willy store a few years ago and I'm pleased to say that 11 of my 12 grandchildren can now recite it. The 12th has not yet started talking, but I can assure you she has already heard the poem a number of times!

*Believe in yourself and in your dream.  
Impossible though things may seem.  
Someday, somehow you'll get through.  
To the goal you have in view.  
Mountains fall and seas divide.  
Before the one who in his stride.  
Takes the hard road day by day.  
Sweeping obstacles away.  
Believe in yourself and in your plan.  
Say not, "I cannot", but "I can".  
The prizes of life we fail to win.  
Because we doubt the power within.  
Anonymous*

## 15. Reviews of three key books

***“The Great Disruption: How the climate crisis will transform the global economy for the better”.* Paul Gilding. Bloomsbury Press. 2011**

**Reviewed in the Canberra Times April 2011 by Bob Douglas**

*“Can we afford to save civilization or would we rather keep the energy costs down while we hurtle off the cliff into collapse?”*

“The great disruption” is a stimulating, indeed an uplifting book by a writer who presents his arguments with blunt passion and careful attention to detail. Paul Gilding was the CEO of Greenpeace International before working as a sustainability consultant to the CEO’s of a number of the largest and most successful businesses in the world.

Gilding argues that economic growth has no future in a world that is already overstretched beyond its capacity to replenish resources. He believes we are approaching a period of massive instability, precipitated by climate change, but resulting from the combination of human population and economic growth. We are now facing limits imposed by physics, chemistry and biology, because the Earth is now full. Despite human brilliance at technological innovation, our current naïve faith in economic growth as a solution to our difficulties will inevitably fail us and we will hit the wall probably quite soon.

The problem is not only climate change but also the massive destruction of the ecosystems on which our lives and livelihoods depend. Gilding has no doubt that we can get through the serious crises and disruption that now lie in wait for humanity. Indeed he finds the challenge positively exhilarating. He argues that the great disruption will bring out the very best of human innovation, compassion and community spirit, although we cannot now avoid chaos and misery for millions and perhaps billions during the transition period.

He says that a successful outcome requires that we will reinvent the human economy. When the world finally accepts the seriousness and inevitability of our predicament, we will respond by unleashing massive ingenuity and capacity to adapt. “Our species is slow but not stupid,” he says. We will be forced to change from shopping and overwork to sharing and enjoying our leisure time, our communities and our relationships. Because we must, we will share the world’s resources with those who are in poverty. And we will all enjoy life more. Continuation of the current consumerist culture now does little for human wellbeing in developed countries like Australia and has huge crippling costs.

Gilding uses the rapid transformation that occurred as the Allied Powers responded to Hitler’s invasion of Poland and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, as evidence of the capacity of human societies to transform and lift themselves to new heights of capacity, communal understanding and support at stunningly short notice. In that situation, as with the one that now faces us, human societies were very slow to act, but once committed, the results were extraordinary.

The climate crisis is only one of a series of interconnected challenges, which now face humanity as we contemplate a population of 9 billion people by 2050. Food insecurity,

water availability, heating of the planet and the destruction of ecosystems are all associated with our pathological addiction to economic growth. Furthermore, he says, it is economic growth that has contributed to growing inequity in the distribution of resources even though it has also lifted millions out of poverty.

Gilding has great respect for the market and also for the role which economic growth has played in the past. But economic growth is over and the market will only serve society if it is regulated to do so. The problem is, we have now passed the planet's limits to growth. We must rethink the human strategy. Inevitably, he says, the dam of denial that it is holding up global action on anthropogenic global warming will collapse and we will act rapidly and with great ingenuity and effect. The sooner the tipping point arrives that will unite the world around the seriousness and mitigation of the gathering storm, the better.

But while we wait for that to happen, millions of people and groups around the world are preparing the building blocks for a new stable state economy that will replace our growth addiction. For a while, the growth addicts will continue to use the growth model to tackle climate change and fight what the author describes as “the 1° war”. This is the requirement that we reduce the world’s carbon emissions budget to one that is compatible with no more than a 1° rise in planetary temperature above preindustrial levels. Currently, we are heading for at least 2° and possibly much more, which would be catastrophic.

This is an optimistic book written by a clear thinker. Gilding shares with the reader his personal journey to these conclusions and the anxieties and uncertainties he has experienced along the way. He also anticipates and deals with many counterarguments to his optimism. He says that the challenge is not only for big business and government, but especially for ordinary people everywhere. Together we must take charge of the restructuring of society and the economy in ways that serve both humanity and our precious environment.

I found little to disagree with in this important work. Perhaps that is because I have been wrestling for some years with many of the same ideas as have tantalized Gilding for much of his life. This is a book that deserves to be read by people of all ages from many walks of life and especially those in business and government. Young people concerned about tomorrow’s world will find here, meaning and hope.

***“The real wealth of nations: creating a caring economy” by Riane Eisler BK Publishers 2008.***

**Reviewed in the Canberra Times June 2009 by Bob Douglas**

Will the current economic crisis end in a remake of the global economy or simply fine tuning of “business as usual?” The economy should serve the full range of needs of humans, and should be our servant, not the reverse. Riane Eisler says our economic model is the underlying cause of much of our current social and environmental angst, embedded as it is in “dominator” cultural values.

Eisler’s thesis is that the key problem is the primacy of dominator ideology, which assigns priority to winning and penalizing the losers. Her prescription for the future is greatly enhanced “partnerism”, caring, empathy and nurture. Throughout history, both partnerism and dominator ideology are present in all societies, but some assign much greater economic weight and value to the caring, nurturing and sharing role and this has happened especially in the Nordic countries.

For much of human history and across the world, men have taken for granted, and devalued the contributions that nurturing and caring make to successful society. Because the nurturing and caring role was in the past, largely a female function, and because masculine activities such as fighting, competing and winning were seen to be absolutely central to human survival, caring and nurturing were, and still remain “soft” activities by contrast with “hard” objects like guns, tanks, computers, and consumer objects. The latter are seen to be legitimate elements of the market economy while caring and nurturing are not. Building caring for people and the environment into our human economy is Eisler’s mission.

The author rejects the view that dominator behavior is intrinsic to human survival as is proposed by some advocates of “the selfish gene” hypothesis. She shows how caring, sharing, and empathy, are fundamental human attributes which light up the pleasure centres of our brains more than does winning and controlling. Furthermore, partnerism makes eminent economic sense and where it has been implemented in a serious way, it tends to produce better human and economic outcomes. It is the dominator culture which has influenced the design of the current global economic system that now contributes centrally to our current dire human predicament. The neo-liberal economic experiment of the past thirty years, has radically reinforced this model.

Caring for children through their formative years is one of the most important valued things that humans do but it is not properly valued in our society, that is driven inexorably by the perceived need by policymakers to maintain growth in the Gross Domestic Product.(GDP)

Growth in the GDP, (which incorporates measures of many things which are harmful in society, and ignores caring almost entirely), is our current deeply flawed measure of economic progress. It must be replaced by new indicators which reflect how the economy serves human well being and the realization of human potential. Only then will the policymakers assign proper value to caring for people and the environment .

Our values are shaped progressively from early childhood through family relations. Where the dominant culture is dominator, people’s life choices are constrained by fear

and a lack of consciousness of alternatives. When children are taught the normality of domination and submission and society doesn't offer an alternative, they are inclined to deny their innate capacity for empathy and consciousness. They in turn build family, educational, religious, economic and political institutions based on the principle with which they grew up. And so the cycle repeats itself generation after generation.

In Eisler's view, we now need a much more complete map of the human economy that assigns economic values to caring for people and the environment. This includes building the economy of households as well as currently unremunerated community contributions into the economic calculus. To do that we will need a raft of new economic instruments and will need progressively to build a culture of "partnerism".

Is all of this "pie in the sky" or an exciting and realistic way forward through the current social and environmental turmoil? That, says the author, depends on how ordinary people respond to her challenge to engage in a new economic conversation about caring and question the all-pervasive dominator culture. For me her argument is compelling. Nurture of children, and care of our environment are fundamental to our future survival and they have been pushed aside by a dominator-infected market culture that values guns over education, prisons over mental health and fad-fashions over ecosystems.

Having a more rounded vision for the future economy is an essential first step out of our current social, economic and environmental predicament and Eisler provides both the vision and a constructive way forwards.

***“Agenda for a New Economy; From Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth” by David Korten 2010***

**Reviewed by Bob Douglas for SEE-Change Newsletter 2010**

Two central issues are driving the growing planetary crisis on environment and social wellbeing. They are growing human populations and a flawed global economy.

David Korten is a US writer and economic commentator who has written an important book entitled "Agenda for a new economy: From phantom wealth to real wealth. He is now moving to have his ideas seriously considered by decision-makers in the US and overseas.

One of Korten's reviewers with whom I agree, states: *"At an urgent moment in human history, David Korten offers a new way to organize our economy that is both inspired and deeply practical. This is a must-read guide to creating a viable future"*. The book is worthy of detailed discussion by book reading groups and there is available on the web, a separate discussion guide for this purpose, prepared by the author.

The second edition of Korten's book was published early in 2010 after it became clear that Barak Obama was not going to institute the radical reforms to the economy that many thought to be desirable. The final chapter is Korten's offered address for the president to re-engineer the American economy that he sees to be the central driver of environmental damage and vast human misery.

I include below a few sentences from the address to provide a little of the flavor of his ideas.

*"We have no more time or resources to devote to fixing a system based on false values and a discredited ideology devoted primarily to creating phantom wealth. We must now come together to create the institutions of a new economy based on a values-based pragmatism that recognizes a simple truth: if the world is to work for any of us it must work for all of us.....*

*Let us henceforth measure economic performance by the indicators of what we really want: the health and wellbeing of our children, families, communities and the natural environment....*

*Previous administrations favored Wall Street but the policies of this administration henceforth will favor the people and businesses on Main Street -- people who are working to rebuild our local communities, restore the middle class and bring our natural environment back to health....*

*Because the world can no longer afford war, the foreign policy of this administration will be crafted to build cooperation among people and nations in order to eliminate terrorism and its underlying causes; resolve conflicts through peaceful diplomacy; rollback military spending and de-militarize the economies of all nations; restore environmental health and increase economic stability....*

*We will work to replace a global system of economic competition with a global system of*

*economic cooperation based on the sharing of beneficial technology and the right of the people of each nation to own and control their own economic resources to meet their needs for food, energy, shelter, education, healthcare and other basic needs.*

*There is no place in a life serving 21st-century economy for financial speculation, predatory lending or institutions that exist primarily to engage in these illegitimate practices. We will act to render Wall Street's casino-like operations unprofitable...*

*We will recommit ourselves to the founding ideals of this great nation, focus on our possibilities and liberate ourselves from failed ideas and institutions of Wall Street. Together we can create a stronger, better nation that secures a fulfilling life for every person and honors the premise of the Declaration of Independence that every individual is endowed with an unalienable right to life, liberty \ and the pursuit of happiness."*

Korten's book is a very strong indictment of the current US economic system, controlled by a Wall Street coalition of the already rich and powerful including the banks, leading international corporations, the media and international finance agencies in their own interests. He emphasizes that the world will change only when vast masses of people demand that it change. Change will not begin from the top.

For readers who are interested to hear more from this leading edge thinker, I recommend a 50 minute YouTube address by Korten to an audience in Oregon late in 2009. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdsZ\\_ILz07Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdsZ_ILz07Q)

I find Korten's views inspirational. I think he offers valuable pointers to the kinds of changes we need to make here in Australia as we attempt to create a more viable, caring and sustainable future for our children in the face of a gathering storm of interlinked problems.

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