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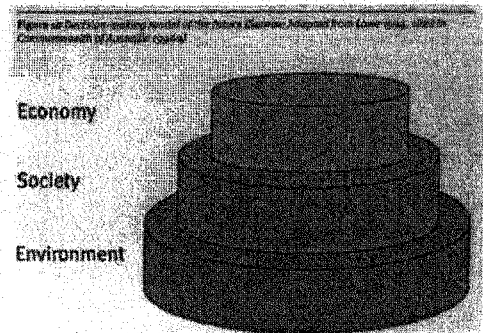
Sustainable Cities 2025
House of Representatives Inquiry
Brisbane – 6 April 2004

Sheila Davis, Gecko Campaign Coordinator

Sustainability: Principles and Frameworks

The Seventeen Laws Relating to Sustainability by Albert A. Bartlett, Professor Emeritus, Department of Physics, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado, (attached) provide the basis for this discussion.

The Decision-making model of the future (adapted from Lowe 1994, cited in the Commonwealth of Australia 1996) shows that the economy and the society are held within a healthy environment.



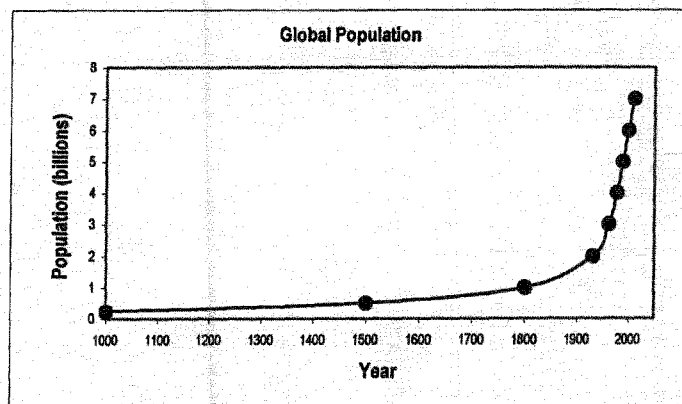
“There is no hope, even in principle, of a sustainable level of development, without a sustainable level of population.”

Professor Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor of Science, Technology and Society at Griffith University.

1. Sustainable population

The population of the world has increased from 1 billion in 1800, to 2 billion in 1930, to over 6 billion by 2000.

The Australian population has doubled in the last 44 years to over 20 million people, and continues to increase by another million every 4 years, approximately half due to natural increase (births over deaths) and half due to immigration.

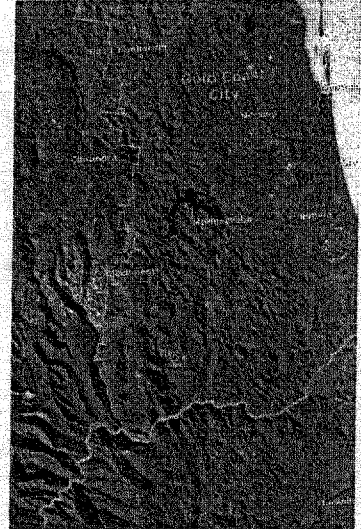


The Australian continent's extreme fragility and climactic conditions, with shallow, nutrient-deficient soils and sparse and erratic rainfall, and the unique plants and animals that it has an obligation to protect, means that it has a very low human carrying capacity, and that most settlement is necessarily on the tiny coastal fringe.

Here in South East Queensland, we have some of the greatest variety of plant and animal species, many of them rare and threatened. With the most rapid human population growth in the country, we are watching in horror as our floodplains, fields, farms, forests and fisheries are covered in housing. See Gecko's attached submission to the SEQ2021 planning process for more details of our concerns.

The Queensland government through its Broadhectare studies of land designated for urban development, assumes the amount of future settlement that can be accommodated. However, these urban designations are based on past poor planning, without studies of nature conservation values, landscape constraints, or the geophysical and biological constraints, such as flooding, steep slopes and bushfire risk, and without consideration of the need to lower our ecological footprint.

Gold Coast City, which is the fastest growing local government in Australia, also has the greatest biodiversity, including a world heritage listed national park, the most extreme landscape constraints of the volcanic Scenic Rim, with its steep catchments and multiple waterways, and high numbers of rare and threatened species and endangered and of concern regional ecosystems.



2. Protection of Biodiversity

In regard to the question of this inquiry about integrating biodiversity protection and urban development, we believe that this is a compromise in those areas that are to be developed, but that areas of nature conservation value should not have human settlement imposed.

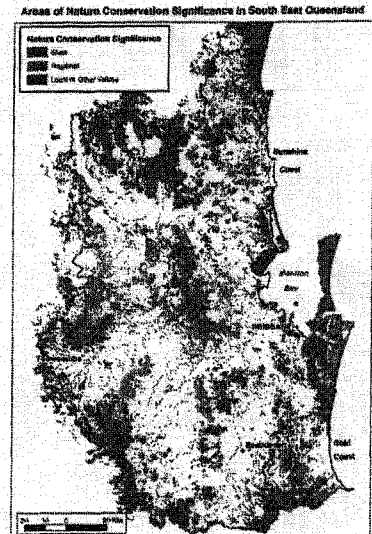
In a recent ABC report, Dr Ray Nias, the Australian Director of Conservation for the World Wildlife Fund, stated that Australia has more endangered animals than any other country, except the United States.

Here in the Gold Coast, we clear 300 hectares for an additional 15,000 people settling each year. With a mammal density just over 51 per hectare in our region, clearing 300 hectares means that 15,000 mammals are killed each year to make way for 15,000 people.

Add to the land required for settlement, the impacts of clearing for tourism, infrastructure and industry, and the ongoing impacts of road kills and domestic animals and weeds, and our wildlife hasn't got a chance.

3. Valuing Ecological services

The ecological services of fresh air, healthy soils, clean water and biodiversity habitat must be valued in our chart of accounts if we are to retain natural areas for future generations to enjoy.



Growth economics, which counts only the benefits of population growth and high consumption rates and not the costs of environmental degradation, has pushed human population beyond the carrying capacity of our region, the Australian continent, and indeed the planet.

Providing an assessment of the values of these ecological services that are being lost and including those costs in our chart of accounts will help us to realise the need to protect them as the life support systems of our region.

4. Open and accountable government

We need open and accountable government, with public participation in the decision making process to ensure sustainability, yet at the recent local government elections on the Gold Coast, we fear there has been a manipulation of the process by a power block with a massively funded developer ticket, resulting in this one vested interest dominating our City.

Attached find copies of Gold Coast Bulletin and Courier Mail reports. With no intervention or control by state or federal government, we fear we are facing the dismantling of all the sustainable development strategies that have been put in place through community participation over the past 10 years, in order to facilitate unsustainable development.

The attached briefing to the Queensland Premier outlines some of the concerns about developer-funded Councils, including the developers recent calls for release of more land, reduced infrastructure costs, the right to hire Council planners and to delegate authority of approval to only two councillors in order to speed along development.

Developers are also seeking to resume high rise buildings for redevelopment, and are seeking to raise the Hinze Dam for water storage despite the cost benefit analysis which shows that a pipeline to Wivenhoe would be more sustainable, and that raising the Dam will result in flooding of 740 hectares of prime wildlife habitat.

5. Lowering our Ecological Footprint

The ecological footprint, that is the amount of productive land needed to sustain us, of Australians is extremely high, equivalent or greater than that of the United States. This is largely due to our dependence upon fossil fuels to travel long distances and our meat-based diet.

The attached paper by Michelle Graymore of the Coastal CRC, Australian School of Environmental Studies, Griffith University, shows the factors included in the ecological footprint of residents of SEQ and how this footprint together with our high population goes far beyond the area boundaries of our region.

While it is acknowledged that areas outside this region may have a lower footprint and population, this calculation is a good indication of the need to both lower our consumption and our population.

Conclusion:

In order to achieve ecologically sustainability, we need to recognise the limits to growth, value our natural areas and lower both our population and our consumption if we are to have a region, a country and a future worth living.

Attachments:

1. The Seventeen Laws Relating to Sustainability by Albert A. Bartlett, Professor Emeritus, Department of Physics, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado
2. Gecko's submission to the SEQ2021 Planning process in which we outlined our concerns about the sustainability of our region, including attachments A – E, which are responses to specific discussion papers.
3. Reports on the local government elections, Gold Coast Bulletin (various) and The Australian (3-4/4/04, p 22)
4. Gecko Briefing Paper to Premier Beattie on the outcomes of the Gold Coast elections.
5. The Ecological Footprint of South East Queensland 2000-01, Michelle Graymore, Coastal CRC, Australian School of Environmental Studies, Griffith University

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HELD BY THE COMMITTEE

ATTACHMENTS TO SUBMISSION NO. 177

**ATTACHMENTS, APPENDICES AND PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED WITH
SUBMISSIONS ARE HELD IN THE COMMITTEE OFFICE**