

WRITE A LETTER, SAVE THE WORLD!

Hut News Insert—Blue Mountains Conservation Society

When Jared Diamond, author of "Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive", spoke at the recent Sydney Writers' Festival of the desperate state of the world, someone in the audience asked him what ordinary people could do to make a difference. He replied: "**You live in a democracy. Influence your decision makers**".

Fortunately, the easiest way for any individual to influence a politician is by doing something really easy that we all know how to do... WRITE A LETTER.

The aim is to make politicians realise that environmental issues are very important to the people. **It won't happen overnight, but it will build over time if we persevere.**

Make a commitment to write at least a letter a month. One a week or every 2 weeks would be even better. It doesn't matter how many times you write on the same issue, even if you say much the same thing each time. **It just shows how much you care.**

For some unknown reason, politicians seem to value hand-written letters more than any other form of communication. So if it suits you, write by hand. However, if you prefer to type a letter, or email one, do that rather than doing nothing. Eventually, they'll get the picture! Phone if you don't have time to write. It all adds up.

Keep your letter to 1 page, and write it in half an hour or less. Put in an envelope and post it ... it can be as easy as that ...

OR, having made the effort to write your letter, you may want to get the most value out of it by sending it further.

If you can, get five copies made and send them to:

- Your local member
- The Minister responsible for the particular issue
- The Shadow Minister responsible for the particular issue (if they know what the people want, they will start pushing the government too)
- The Premier or Prime Minister (depending on whether it's a state or federal issue)
- The Leader of the Opposition (state or federal)
- You might be able to turn it into a letter for publication in your local newspaper

If you don't know which Minister to send it to, just send it to the Premier or Prime Minister.

Write about any environmental issue you feel concerned about. The newspapers are full of them – remember, you don't need to have an expert opinion though if you do that's fine too. **Just keep letting them know these are the issues that are important to you, and what are they doing about them? Always ask that last question!**

You may well get a reply telling you that everything is fine, the government has it all under control. There may be some truth in what they say or it may be mostly spin – **it doesn't matter, just keep writing!**

If you can read one or more of the following books, it will give you a 'big-picture' understanding of why it is so urgent for each of us to do something, not just to hope that somehow 'the government' or someone else will sort it all out. It is rare for governments to show real

leadership – mostly they follow the people's lead.

- '**Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive**' by Dr Jared Diamond
- '**A Short History of Progress**' by Ronald Wright, which describes how the economic interdependence of the world today means that collapse, if and when it comes again, will be global.
- '**A Big Fix – radical solutions for Australia's environmental crisis**' by Ian Lowe, emeritus professor of science, technology and society at Griffith University and president of Australian Conservation Society.

Some of what you will read is that ecological markers suggest that humans' use of nature's output has been: 70% in early 1960s, 100% in early 1980s, 125% in 1999. World population figures were two billion in 1925, six billion in 2000 and will be nine billion by 2050. **We are already living on the capital of nature, not the interest, and this situation will become desperate in our children's lifetime.**

Writing letters to influence our decision makers is what all of us can do. If we don't do that, if we don't actively become part of the solution, then we're just part of the problem. The world our children inherit will be our fault.

Talk to other people about what you're doing and why. Photocopy this information and circulate it further. Better still, email me at mosman@hermes.net.com for an electronic copy and send it far and wide through your networks.

— Robin Mosman.



CONTACT DETAILS

All NSW State parliamentarians can be written to at Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney 2000.

Local State Member (for Blue Mountains NSW): The Hon Bob Debus
NSW Minister for Environment: The Hon Bob Debus
NSW Shadow Minister for Environment: The Hon Michael Richardson MP
NSW Premier: The Hon Maurice Lemma
NSW Leader of the Opposition: The Hon Peter Debnam MP

All Federal parliamentarians can be written to at Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600

Local Federal Member: The Hon Kerry Bartlett MP
Federal Minister for Environment: The Hon Ian Campbell
Federal Shadow Minister for Environment: The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister of Australia: The Hon John Howard

Full contact and further details of all Federal and State politicians can be found on the web:

(Federal) www.aph.gov.au
(State) www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/members.nsf/V3Home

"The future is up for grabs, lying in our own hands"

Some of you may remember me as a past president of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, or have noticed my name in connection with the 'Stealth' campaign. I actually started to be active in environmental issues about 25 years ago on the Central Coast, where I co-ordinated three big community actions (all with successful outcomes) and was involved in different ways with some eight others, most of which succeeded. I tell you this only in order to give my credentials – I do know a fair bit about what works in environmental campaigning.

In the last 6 months I have read the three very important books described on page 1: **Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive** by Dr Jared Diamond; **A Short History of Progress** by Ronald Wright, and **A Big Fix – radical solutions for Australia's environmental crisis** by Ian Lowe.

I have also become even more aware of the looming 'Peak Oil' crisis, and the critical urgency of reducing global warming.

Ian Lowe says **"The warnings from scientists are urgent and unequivocal ... We are using resources future generations will need, damaging environmental systems and compromising social stability by increasing the gap between rich and poor. In short, we are consuming the future"**.

It hasn't been a time for optimism. I am a mother and grandmother. I very much want the world to go on in a way that will give some reasonable quality of life to future generations. I'm also a bit wiser than I was when I fought some of those earlier campaigns. I know that Jared

Diamond is absolutely right when he says:

"...we are not beset by insoluble problems...Because we are the cause of our environmental problems, we are the ones in control of them, and we can choose or not choose to stop causing them and start solving them. The future is up for grabs, lying in our own hands. We don't need new technologies to solve our problems; while new technologies can make some contribution, for the most part we 'just' need the political will to apply solutions already available".

Easy enough to say. But how can this 'political will' be created if it doesn't seem to be there?

Most people who have never been actively involved in campaigning have no idea of the power of continued public pressure on politicians. Let me assure you from my own direct experience that it is far more powerful than we can possibly imagine. The recent issue of mandatory detention of refugees is a great example of this. At many times the position seemed hopeless, the government intransigent. But the people opposing didn't give up – they kept on writing their letters, making their phone calls, organising rallies, creating a groundswell of public support that eventually made the government change its position.

This is what we can do too, on important environmental issues. And we can do it in a way that is possible and quite easy for each and every one of us.

We can write letters to our elected representatives and tell them that we are unhappy with

decisions they seem bent on making.

We don't have to be experts on the subject in question. There are plenty of experts who are doing their bit in their own way. We don't have to present all the arguments or solutions. A few sentences will do. **We just have to care enough to make the effort to write.** *As enough of us start to do this, 'political will' can change.* There is a saying **"I don't care how much you know, until I know how much you care"**. That's how it is with pollies. Politicians know that for every one voter who cares enough to make the effort to write them a letter, there are probably hundreds of others who feel the same way – so they pay attention, even if they don't acknowledge it to us.

Our letters are like pebbles thrown into a pond, and we never know how far the ripples go. We need to write them anyway.

Ronald Wright says **"We have the tools and the means to share resources, clean up pollution, dispense basic health care and birth control, set economic limits in line with natural ones. If we don't do these things now, while we prosper, we will never be able to do them when times get hard. Our fate will twist out of our hands. And this new century will not grow very old before we enter an age of chaos and collapse that will dwarf all the dark ages in our past. Now is our last chance to get the future right."**

Hut News will run a letter writing "Topic of the Month" to give you some ideas, but don't feel limited to them – get involved in this easy participatory democracy and help save the world! **Robin Mosman.**

SAMPLE LETTER

Hon. Senator Ian Campbell
Minister for the Environment and Heritage
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.

From: (Your name and address)

Date:

Dear Minister

RE: Desalination plant and potential environmental impacts

I would like to express my concern that no environmental impact assessment has been conducted and that the NSW community has not been consulted.

The desalination plant if constructed would output a plume of highly concentrated brine which could have grave consequences for marine life.

The plant would also consume a vast amount of power – adding to global warming.

Why not recycle waste water, instead of using the ocean outfalls to dump it out into the ocean? If this was done it would be a much cheaper solution, require very much less energy and in addition valuable nutrients instead of being wasted, could be recovered for use as fertiliser. In addition, the adverse effects on marine life of dumping all these nutrients into the ocean would cease.

As the Federal Minister for the Environment, you have the power to halt this desalination plant proposal and to press for water recycling instead - as is done successfully and safely in many other countries.

Please keep me informed about your decisions on this important matter.

Yours sincerely, (signed)