



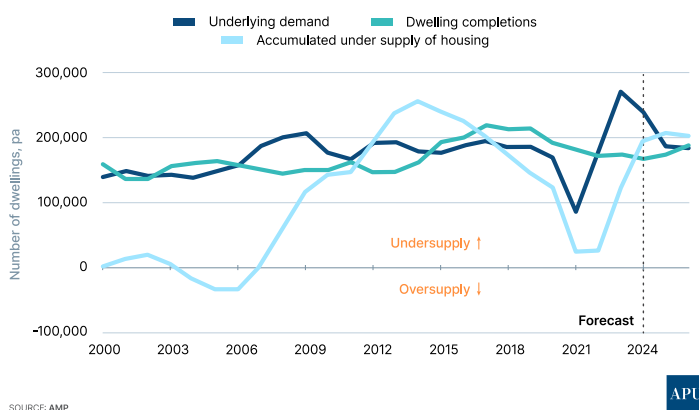
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Sustainable Population Australia -- Newsletter

Patrons: The Hon Bob Carr • Professor Ian Lowe • Professor Tim Flannery • Dr Katharine Betts • Dr Paul Collins • Prof Anne Poelina

HOUSING: PM must address demand as well as supply

The supply of housing has not kept up with underlying demand for two decades



"And I say this message to the Senate and to members of the House of Representatives that, you know, we have a clear mandate to build more housing. The key is supply. The key is supply. You know, get out of the way and let the private sector build it. That is going to be one of my priorities." Anthony Albanese, Press Conference, 5 May 2025.

These sentiments were repeated by Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke on ABC-TV's Q&A that night. The 'key to solving the housing crisis is supply' was the message from the newly re-elected majority Labor Government.

Was this apparent suppression of the demand side of the equation deliberate? Were they embarrassed that housing had become unaffordable for the majority during their watch, when immigration-fuelled population growth far exceeded the rate at which new homes were built?

The government needs reminding of what those figures were. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), for the year ending 31 December 2022, population growth was 496,756, of which just under four fifths was from Net Overseas Migration (NOM – immigration minus emigration). For the next year, ending 31 December 2023, population growth was 651,200, of which NOM was well over four-fifths. ABS don't yet have the figures for December 2024, but for the year to September 2024, population growth was 484,000 of which NOM was just under four fifths. The balance, of course, came from natural increase (births minus deaths) which is slowly declining but still

above 100,000 annually.

The downward trend in that final year was welcome but, on the basis of 2.5 people per household, 484,000 new people would have required 193,600 homes. How many commenced construction in 2024? 168,049, a shortfall of around 25,000. Better than the previous year's shortfall of 100,000, but still not meeting new demand, let alone accumulated demand that includes the homeless; those living in tents or cars or sleeping on other people's sofas. It does not necessarily include those driven to the fringes of cities or regions because inner and middle suburbs are completely out of reach financially, but many of these people are also severely disadvantaged by the housing shortage and would benefit from more housing closer to their workplaces.

In the lead-up to the election on 3 May, the Coalition and some other parties finally made the connection between high population growth and the undersupply of housing and called for a significant reduction in NOM. Labor said it would slow NOM to 260,000 people next financial year then maintain it at 235,000 per annum.

So assuming natural increase of around 100,000, that means population growth of 360,000 next financial year. On the basis of 2.5 people per household, that would require an additional 144,000 homes in one year. Were Labor delivering on its Housing Accord, that would be achievable. Labor is ostensibly investing \$43 billion in housing with an ambitious target of building 1.2 million homes over the next five years; that's 240,000 homes a year. That's a lot more, however, than the total of just under 170,000 that commenced construction in 2024. So the rate of construction will need to lift considerably if the aims of the Housing Accord are to be realised.

There are many reasons why NOM, and in turn, population growth, needs to be reduced in this country. Housing is only one of them. The main reason is the preservation of our environment; of our natural systems. Yet as far as housing is concerned, Labor would do well to quietly adopt one Coalition policy and cut 100,000 from immigration and then, and perhaps only then, will supply have any real hope of, not just matching new demand, but accumulated demand as well. JG

High fertility in low-income settings: the cruelty of unfettered capitalism

by Colin Butler



Colin Butler

Abrupt as they may seem, recent changes to US aid policies are consistent with the neoliberal economic ideology long championed by many Republicans, and embraced by many Democrats, since the Reagan presidency. Family planning was one of its casualties.

The re-election of US President Donald Trump appears to have ended the partial restraint of “tooth and claw” in international relations, evident since the end of World War II. But this is not the first time since 1945 that international relations have crossed a threshold, foreshadowing increasing disorder. In 1980, the election of US President Ronald Reagan was a triumph for neoliberalism, the movement to deregulate capitalism. It signified the end of the “warm decade for social justice”, which Halfdan Mahler (the longest-serving director the World Health Organization) had called the 1970s. Mahler also noted that after the 1978 Alma-Ata conference (“Health for all by the year 2000”), when “everything seemed possible” there came “an abrupt reversal”. This reversal soon extended to global thinking on rapid population growth and its relationship with development and conflict.

According to one scholar, the US government had incorporated Malthusian concerns ever since the Truman administration’s “Point Four” foreign aid program, which posited that population growth-induced resource scarcity bred Communism. In 1969, US President Richard Nixon called population growth “one of the most serious challenges to human destiny in the last third of this century”. In 1971 a committee of the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) published a report concluding that “political and social conflicts” are “greatly worsened by rapid population growth”.

Long after Nixon resigned, he wrote: “countries such as Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Somalia will need to maintain real economic growth rates greater than 3% just to keep their per capita incomes from dropping. Unchecked population growth will put them on an ever-accelerating treadmill that will outpace any potential economic performance”.

In a debate prior to the 1984 US presidential election, both President Reagan and his Democratic opponent Walter Mondale showed insight into these issues. Reagan signalled his government’s about-face on family planning by stating: “as a matter of fact the population explosion, if you look at the actual figures, has been vastly exaggerated – over-exaggerated.” Yet, he also noted “the problem of population growth is one here with re-

gard to our immigration. And we have been the safety valve, whether we wanted to or not, with the illegal entry here; in Mexico, where their population is increasing and they don’t have an economy that can absorb them and provide the jobs.” Mondale argued: “One of the biggest problems today is that the countries to our south are so desperately poor that these people who will almost lose their lives if they don’t come north, come north despite all the risks.”

During the Reagan administration a report was commissioned to update the 1971 NAS assessment. It was co-chaired by D. Gale Johnson and Ronald Lee. Published in 1986, this report is far more circumspect than the earlier one. However, while silent on the risk of conflict, it does note that “an increase in fertility will, at least in the short run, shift income from landless workers to owners of land and capital. This shift will tend to increase both the number of people who are poor (defined in absolute income terms) and the degree of income inequality in the society.” However, unlike the earlier NAS report, this report lacked statements unequivocally concluding that rapid population growth harms society. It implicitly characterises the 1971 report as “extreme”, asserting such views have “little support”.

Johnson was a “cornucopian”. For example, in 2000 he published an article which claimed that “the creation of knowledge” enabled “the world to escape from what could be called the Malthusian trap”.⁸ Interestingly, Johnson did not discuss the then recent (1994) genocide in Rwanda, which the economists Andre and Platteau called a “Malthusian trap”.

Cornucopianism – the conceit that ingenuity will perpetually trump resource scarcity – was excessively influential in the 1986 report. For example, 12 of its 217 references were either to Julian Simon (a proselytiser of cornucopianism) or to chapters in his co-edited book *The Resourceful Earth: A Response to Global 2000*. Simon made statements such as “supplies of natural resources are not limited in any economic sense. Nor does past experience give reason to expect natural resources to become more scarce. Rather, if history is any guide, natural resources will progressively become less costly, hence less scarce, and will constitute a smaller proportion of our expenses in future years.”

During the Reagan administration, the official US position on population growth altered radically. Finkle and Crane noted that the US position at the United Nations’ 1984 Mexico City population conference “seemed to challenge some of the basic assumptions underlying national and international population programs. Replacing the previous emphasis on the need for vigorous government programs to reduce the rate of population growth, the new

Opinion

US position asserted in a formal policy statement that “population growth is, of itself, a neutral phenomenon.” The statement further contended that developing countries experiencing population pressures should reduce government interference in their economies in order to promote economic growth and thereby reduce fertility.” Finkle and Crane also noted that the Population Association of America, representing US demographers and population specialists, commented that the authors of the draft US report for this 1984 meeting were “either unaware of 50 years of demographic research, or deliberately ignored it”. In the US, 245 editorials were published about this, of which fewer than 40 supported the government position.

What caused this shift? Perhaps the view that an indefinitely poor global South (kept poor in part by tabooing the topic of population growth and its relationship to development, and thus undermining family planning programs) would increase labour forces and depress wages in the South, maximising cheap resource extraction and material consumption by neoliberalism’s “winners”. The Marxist scholar Joan Robinson lends support to this view. In the preface to her book *Essay on Marxian Economics* she wrote: “In his anxiety to combat the reactionary views of Malthus he [i.e. Marx] refused to admit that a rapid growth of population is deleterious to the interests of the working class.” The late ecological economist Herman Daly cited Robinson and remarked that the literal Latin meaning of ‘proletariat’ is ‘those with many offspring’; “the lowest class of a people, whose members, poor and exempt from taxes, were useful to the republic

only for the procreation of children”.

Maurice King, the leading proponent in public health scholarship of the concept of “demographic entrapment,” identified the risk to capitalism as an especially important reason for suppressing the harm to human wellbeing from rapid population growth. He wrote that lifting the taboo on the discussion of population growth risked “the economic foundations of the global society, its materialist, consumerist, market economy, driven by the diabolical processes of advertising to promote ever more luxurious and unsustainable lifestyles.”

The US administration of Donald Trump is clearly uninterested in global development. It has slashed the budget for USAID. The tabooing and suppression of the relationship between rapid population growth and perpetuating poverty, which took hold in the 1980s, was a more subtle manifestation of this disinterest. The schism between those who advocate human rights-based family planning in the South and those on the Left who harshly criticise such advocacy is a trap set by neoliberalism. Releasing this trap is long overdue.

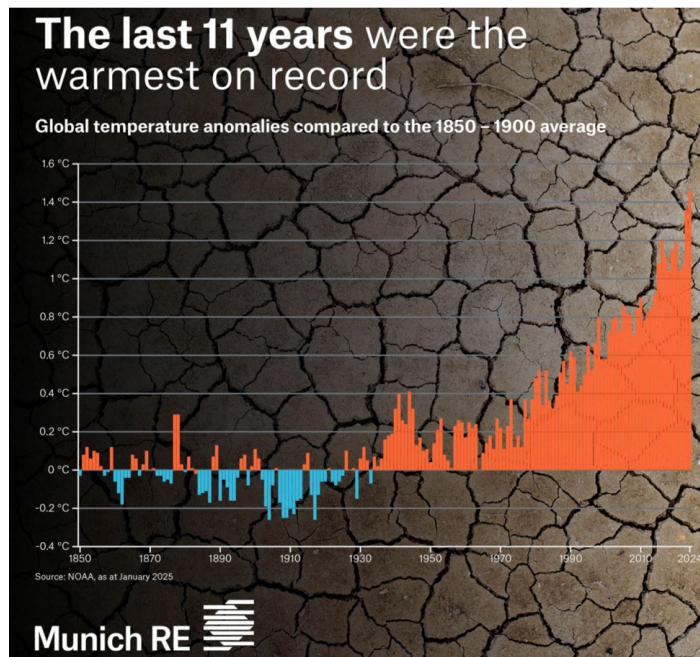
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This article appeared on The Overpopulation Project on 18 March 2025. The full article including references can be found at <https://overpopulation-project.com/high-fertility-in-low-income-settings-the-cruelty-of-unfettered-capitalism/>



Jobseekers queuing in the hope of short-term contracts in Cape Town. Photo: Ashraf Hendricks, GroundUp

Tim Buckley: Will there be enough renewable energy in the system to meet demand?



(We suspect the answer is yes! Ed.)

At the public meeting organised by SPA on 26 April, Tim Buckley, director of Climate Energy Finance (CEF), made the following points:

- CEF acts on the basis of climate science, and the last 11 years were the warmest on record
- The world invested US\$2.1 trillion in cleantech in 2024, over 11% year on year
- The boom in solar and wind pushed the world past 40% clean electricity in 2024
- Global solar power is doubling every three years
- In 2024, renewable power sources collectively added a record 858 TWh of generation – a 49% increase over the previous record of 577 TWh set in 2022. 2024 renewables met 75% of growth in electricity in demand globally.
- Electrification of everything is a major driver of global electricity demand, replacing oil and gas demand (e.g. cars). Data centres, EV and heat pumps are contributing twice as much demand growth as they were five years ago.
- China leads the world on progressive electrification of everything.
- In Germany, while nuclear and oil's contribution to electricity production has remained stable, coal and natural gas have fallen while renewables have soared.
- Fossil generation has decoupled from electricity demand growth in both China and India (2024/25) due to accelerated pace of clean deployments.

- China leads the world in firmed renewable energy globally, by far, adding another 76.5GW of renewables capacity just in the first quarter of 2025.
- Both new electric vehicles (NEV) and battery energy storage systems (BESS) momentum has accelerated to-date in 2025
- Massive deflation, manufacturing capacity expansion and technology development has meant the combination of solar + BESS has accelerated the energy transition.
- China's response to the growing US and EU anti-China trade barriers has been to invest US\$156bn in clean-tech globally.
- As the US self-isolates and embraces climate science denialism, this opens new options for strategic alliances for China, including South Korea and Japan, and with Britain and France.
- The world is responding to China's challenge, for instance, the European Commission has announced another €100bn for clean industrial developments.
- Australia is also responding to China's challenge with strategic public capital a key facilitator in the absence of a CO2 price signal. For instance, federal Labor launched a \$2 billion green aluminium production credit scheme.
- Nuclear power is not the solution for Australia, it is a distraction, and would cost the Australian economy at least \$4.3 trillion by 2050.
- China is dominating the world in clean tech in all respects including manufacturing, research and development, domestic installations, exports and overseas foreign direct investments.
- CEF has produced a report [Green Metal Statecraft](#) which argues that repositioning Australia as a global leader in green iron exports has the potential to double the value of its iron exports to over \$250 billion pa, a key to securing economic prosperity.
- A 'Clean Commodities Trading Company' could enhance Australia's green superpower ambitions.
- CEF is also advocating for the development of an Asian CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism), to leverage and extend the EU CBAM, and China's national Emissions Trading Scheme in electricity, hopefully soon to also cover steel.



Tim Buckley

Yes, we do need a population plan

by Jenny Goldie

Abul Rizvi rightly argues that “[we desperately need a population plan](#) to enable better planning for our future by governments at all levels, and businesses”.

He suggests, however, that it be the immigration minister who formulates the plan. This would be a classic example of putting the cart before the horse. Immigration is merely a subset of population growth, the other subset being natural increase. A population plan thus needs to extend beyond immigration.

A population plan needs to encompass a broad range of issues, not just as Rizvi suggests, ageing and the interests of business or the economy. It must address the environment as well. Ecological sustainability has to be the bottom line. As the late, great economist Herman Daly famously said, “The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment, not the reverse.”

This is not to say it should then be the environment minister who takes responsibility for formulating a population plan. It needs a panel of experts, chaired by an ecologist to emphasise the central role of the environment. It should also include demographers to advise on the dependency ratio, scientists to advise on climate and energy, and agronomists to provide input on food production. It could include social scientists. We might add economists to advise on the provision of infrastructure. However, we don't need conventional economists hell-bent on a growth economy. What we do want are ecological economists who understand the limits to growth on a finite planet.

Once this panel of experts has drawn up a population plan, one which recommends immigration numbers for that year, the immigration minister would then implement its recommendations. That would be the minister's role, not drawing up the plan in the first place.

For a population plan to be genuinely sustainable, it must incorporate a phase-out of population growth. A [recent paper](#) in the academic journal *Encyclopedia*, cites population growth as a direct cause of deforestation, climate change, biodiversity loss, fisheries depletion, water scarcity, and desertification. As its author, Alon Tal, writes in an associated article, “[global deforestation remains staggering](#), especially in tropical regions. Between 2001 and 2023, Brazil lost nearly 69 million hectares of forest, while Indonesia lost more than 30 million. Most of this destruction wasn't for lumber exports or furniture – it was simply to make room for 34 million and 59 million more people respectively”.

Climate change? “Every person is born with a carbon footprint,” Tal writes. “That means more people equals more greenhouse gas emissions. Even in countries with low per capita emissions, the cumulative impact of rising populations is massive.”

And who is to blame for the 73% decline in the earth's monitored vertebrate populations between 1970 and 2020? “While habitat fragmentation, overhunting, and pollution are often cited as culprits, each of these [ultimately is associated with population growth](#),” says Tal.

At some point, preferably before the last forest is cut down, before too many species have gone extinct, before the last fish is pulled from the sea, before we get to “[hothouse Earth](#)”, and before the rivers run dry, we have to stop population growth. We may well then need to reduce our numbers slowly and voluntarily until ecological sustainability is achieved.

Were there no immigration to Australia, we would be on that path to zero population growth already. In the year ending September 2024, natural increase was 104,200, a decline of 3200 (3.0%) people over the previous year. Were that rate to continue it would take 23 years to reach zero population growth, though if fertility continues to fall further from the current record low of 1.5 (children per woman), zero growth would be reached sooner.

All that, however, assumes no net overseas migration. No government is going to cut it completely, nor should it, because of the need to retain the humanitarian program, some family reunion and to import those highly skilled workers we cannot train here. We can, however, stabilise population numbers in Australia below 30 million by reducing NOM to between 70,000 and 80,000. That's about half what Opposition Leader Dutton is proposing (160,000), less than a third of what Labor is advocating (260,000), a fifth of what it was in the year to September 2024 (379,800) and a seventh of what it was the year before that (548,800).

Of course, in times of climate change, ideal figures for NOM may be thrown into disarray. Millions of environmental refugees may come knocking on the door; irrigated agriculture may largely disappear from the mainland, leaving us with less food to feed even our current population; parts of the country may become uninhabitable; and damage to infrastructure from repeated and worsening extreme weather may bankrupt the economy.

A precautionary approach is needed. A population plan needs to take into account not just our current resource limits, but likely future ones as well. The aim should be to achieve numbers of people where humans, wildlife, and natural systems can thrive.

I fear we have already passed that point.

This article first appeared in John Menadue's Pearls and Irritations on 24 April 2025. <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/04/yes-we-do-need-a-population-plan/>



Jenny Goldie cycling around the Mekong Delta in April

Campaign Update

Dear Members and Supporters

As this edition of the SPA Newsletter goes to print, the election results have just come in and once again it is more disappointment for all who are concerned about Australia's population growth and the business as usual pursuit of endless growth within finite ecological limits.

The broader community is always keen for SPA to campaign hard in the lead up to each Federal election. Unfortunately, as a registered charitable organisation, we are limited in what we can say as we must remain politically non-partisan. Furthermore, SPA is a 'broad church', including supporters and members from across the political spectrum. Complicating matters further, there are precious few political parties that align well with SPA's core values. These are: stabilising Australia's population below 30 million; reducing net overseas migration to between 50,000 and 80,000 per annum; a generous foreign aid policy with a focus on reproductive healthcare and family planning; and a commitment toward environmental conservation.

Until the political zeitgeist of this issue changes, the best we can do at SPA, come Federal election time, is to encourage our supporters and the broader public to contact their political candidates to remind them that population growth is the number one issue. To that effect, I believe SPA has made a decent splash. We have launched online ads directing people to our [Election 2025 landing page](#), our [DoGooder letter campaign](#) and the [SPA position statement](#). We have also encouraged our members and supporters to contact their MPs directly.

The results have been encouraging. Over the past two months, 2,000 signatures were added to the position statement for a total of 19,000 by mid-April. With this milestone, our subsequent media release received positive media attention, meaning we could advocate for immigration as a key election issue ahead of the election.

It is important to reflect on the aggregate value that position statement signatures bring to SPA's lobbying efforts. Last year, when we reached 12,000 signatures, our media profile shot up as more journalists paid attention to our message. We have since fostered ongoing working relationships with several prominent radio stations, who now see SPA as having independent experts on the population issue.

At 15,000 signatures, the politicians could no longer ignore us, and we have been able to secure meetings with the offices of cabinet ministers, shadow ministers and other key MPs.

At 19,000 signatures, we could make immigration a key election issue ahead of the federal election.

Imagine what we could do with 50,000 signatures? 100,000? The more that SPA can show public backing of our core demands, the better we can lobby for positive change on your behalf.

How do we reach 100,000 signatures? Through working together - if each of our 7,000 supporters and members encouraged 10 friends, family members, or colleagues to sign the position statement, we'd reach 100,000 overnight. Just imagine the media and political attention we could draw from that milestone.

We can also reach this milestone through campaigning and advertising. To date, SPA has trialled many different campaign methods, including billboard, leaflets and community stalls. These have all been invaluable in their own right. However, the one method that has worked best for us has been through online and social media ads. To date, these have been our primary driving force behind the uptake of position statement signatures, DoGooder letters and our increase in supporter numbers. They are also our best value for money per dollar spent.

In order to get another 80,000 signatures through online ads alone, we will need to budget at least \$50,000 to fund enough ads.

We know we CAN get there, however this is only possible through YOUR support. You can help us through actively sharing the [position statement](#) or by [donating to SPA](#) to help us fund our online ad campaigns.

Speaking of social media, I would like to welcome Mark Allen and Geoff Buckmaster, who are sharing social media coordination duties on Facebook and X while Martin Tye is on well-deserved leave. Our social media coordinators are critical assets for SPA, particularly as social media has become SPA's best tool in communicating with the broader community. This year alone, our Facebook page has had 18,000 engagements from the public.

Another milestone has been achieved through the SPA sponsored [Post-Growth Australia Podcast](#) (PGAP). This April, PGAP reached 30,000 downloads. The podcast has become the premiere hub for online discussions for the De-growth movement in Australia, while introducing a broader audience to the issue of overpopulation.

SPA has had many opportunities for community outreach since the New Year. Several members, including Peter Strachan, Sandra Kanck, Stephen Morris and myself have been interviewed on

radio, participated on panels or given presentations to community groups. The South Australia and Northern Territory branch hosted two events in Adelaide, including one with former [Senator Rex Patrick](#) that may be watched at the SPA website. There is a demand for SPA's message that is growing, despite best efforts to suppress our voice from vested interests.

As this goes to print, SPA just recently had its National AGM on the 26 April, in Sydney, followed by an afternoon seminar "Energy and Water: can supply keep up with rising demand?" I would like to thank the three seminar speakers Tim Buckley, Jonathan Sobels and Peter Cook, with Mark Diesendorf as MC. For those who were unable to attend, don't forget to check the SPA website as we will be uploading the recordings soon. I wish to extend my thanks to the NSW branch for hosting this event and particularly to Jenny Goldie for coordinating the event. After decades of tireless dedication on the SPA executive committee, Jenny will be stepping down to focus more time on her family and I wish her all the best. She will be editing this and the next issue of the SPA Newsletter. I'm sure the Newsletter will not be the same without her and her contributions to SPA will be missed.

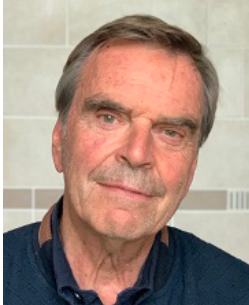
Michael Bayliss
Communications Manager



Sister Organisation



Démographie Responsable



Martin Rott

Last year, one of our SPA members, Stephen Morris, travelled to France. While there, he took the opportunity to meet up with members of "Démographie Responsable (DR)," who are the leading population sustainability advocacy organisation in France. DR is also affiliate to the European Umbrella organisation "European Alliance for Sustainable Population (eurASP)."

We caught up with Martin Rott, Manager for the Occitanie + Vaucluse regions.

SPA: Martin, tell us a little about yourself, including your background and your passions.

Martin: I was born in 1947 in Germany and have lived in France since 1980. A lawyer by training, I worked primarily in the aircraft manufacturing industry, notably at Airbus Industry in Toulouse, first in the legal field and then in the commercial sphere.

I became interested in demographic issues during my school years, and was influenced by the Meadows Report in 1972. Five years ago, I joined Démographie Responsable, where I am responsible for Occitanie, the region where I now live, not far from the city of Nîmes. As a Protestant Christian, I am also interested in the place that demographic issues occupy in the "new green theology." I am particularly critical of the silence of the Protestant churches with regard to demographic issues, which follow those of the Catholic Church developed in the 2015 papal encyclical "Laudato Si'."

I am also the representative of Responsible Demography on the Board of the European Alliance for Sustainable Population (eurASP).

SPA: Tell us a little more about Démographie Responsable, including its history, your role, what the organisation is advocating for, and some of its recent campaigns, successes and/or challenges

Martin: Démographie Responsable was founded in 2008 by a small group of people who, while discussing ecology, noticed that in all debates on nature protection, the issue of demography was conspicuously absent, and that there was even a real taboo on the subject. Believing, on the contrary, that human population numbers were a determining factor in environmental damage, they decided to create an association to raise awareness of this issue.

Little by little, the association grew in structure, organising and holding conferences, participating in numerous trade shows, writing articles, alerting the press, drafting petitions, and organising demonstrations.

As our activities progressed, our membership grew, reaching 330 people in recent years. Démographie Responsable has a primarily media role, it is about alerting the people, the political world, and decision-makers in general to the fact that protecting nature inevitably requires a policy of demographic moderation. Our role remains advocacy-based as we obviously do not have the financial means to carry out significant family planning actions ourselves.

SPA: Why is overpopulation a concern for you and others at Démographie Responsable and what are the specific issues impacting France and neighbouring European countries?

Martin: France is experiencing strong population growth (40 million inhabitants in 1950, 67 million today). The population density is 106 inhabitants per square km. This means that France is overpopulated by 70%, according to Global Footprint Network (GFN) calculations.

For a long time, its fertility rate was above the European average, but at 1.79%, it has now fallen below the threshold for generational renewal. This has motivated French President Macron to call for a "demographic rearmament." In the current context of economic slowdown, environmental issues and the ecological transition have become secondary in France, as throughout Europe. Our message of an overpopulated world, which was already a taboo subject before, has become even more difficult to convey.

SPA: What are the barriers in advocating for population sustainability and reducing immigration to the broader community and getting mainstream attention? From your observations, how does the conversation on population in France and Europe compare to the USA or Australia?

Martin: Despite a fertility rate below the replacement rate, France's population is growing due to immigration. Migration pressure is high throughout Europe due to its geographical proximity to poorer countries experiencing strong population growth, such as Africa, whose population will nearly double by 2050. It is even stronger in France because it attracts immigration from former French colonies and Algeria.

In 2023, a survey commissioned by DR showed that 72% of the French population wanted the issue of overpopulation to be addressed in the environmental debate. This result is proof that the French population is quite receptive to the demographic message. This is especially true given that France experienced a series of natural disasters in 2024, notably floods linked to land development, itself a consequence of rampant urbanisation to accommodate a constantly growing population.

Despite public opinion, the French political class denies the problem of overpopulation. Like other European governments, its goal is the pursuit of economic growth, which, according to it, presupposes population growth. Most surprising is the demographic taboo among green political parties, not only in France but throughout Europe. Since the 1990s, these parties have leant to the left, even the far left. The resulting ideological prejudices prevent them from recognising the importance of the demographic factor in environmental degradation. In the face of ideology, scientific arguments carry no weight, as demonstrated by President Trump's anti-scientific policies.

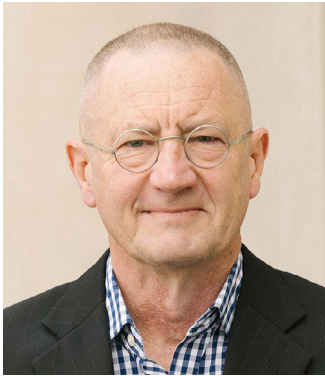
SPA: If SPA members would like to find out more about Démographie Responsable, where can they go and how can contact you?

Martin: You can find out more at the [Démographie Responsable](https://www.demographie-responsable.fr/) website: (<https://www.demographie-responsable.fr/>). I also encourage readers to refer to the mission statement of the European Alliance for Sustainable Population (eurASP) on its website (<https://www.eurasp.org/what-we-do/>).



Meet our Members

Geoff Buckmaster



Did you know that the SPA Facebook page is our best performing interface with the outside world? Our Social Media staff play an essential role in maintaining SPA's public profile. With Martin Tye on leave until July, we welcomed Geoff Buckmaster and Mark Allen to the team. SPA caught up with Geoff to find out more.

SPA: Geoff, tell us a little about yourself, including work history, passions and what first got you thinking about overpopulation.

Geoff: Professionally, I'm best described as a business generalist. My career history has covered banking, defence, energy and most recently, disability services. Although this sounds a little clichéd, I've pursued diverse roles that offer the opportunity to be part of change. I've had the opportunity to work in the implementation of banking reforms as well as corporate strategy for a major electricity distribution network as the first of our renewable energy projects were being commissioned.

As a teen, I recall being horrified by news and images of famines in Ethiopia and Bangladesh and trying to make sense of these tragedies. These stories were lived experiences of scarcity. My university studies then introduced me to the notion of endless growth which I could never really reconcile. Pre-internet at that time, I would scour the libraries for books or articles that helped bridge theory and reality. Sometime in the mid-eighties I discovered "Limits to Growth" and that's when I had my overpopulation epiphany. That was closely followed by Paul Ehrlich's seminal work "The Population Bomb". They are still on my bookshelf.

SPA: Why is population growth a foremost concern for you? How have you seen population growth impact Canberra (where you live) and beyond?

Geoff: When I was born, the planet supported around 3.2b people. We are currently at 8.2b with a trajectory toward 10b. During this time we have seen catastrophic ecological destruction on land, in our oceans, in our groundwater systems and in the atmosphere as we all seek higher living standards. In developed countries, many of us live well. We should respect the right of the world's poorest to also live well, however we know this comes at an environmental cost. Given that technology offers no guarantees on addressing environmental destruction, as responsible custodians of this planet for all living creatures, it is a moral obligation to focus on our own fertility rates. Stabilising the population is the only long-term solution and it links every environmental problem.

It may sound selfish, however, the issue took on greater urgency for myself when we started a family. In early 2000s, we moved to Canberra for a better lifestyle. Since then, Canberra - like every other city - has endured rapid exponential growth. The most poignant impacts have been the extent of sprawl and the corresponding loss of habitat. Sadly, they cull kangaroos because their numbers are considered too high.

SPA: When and how did you first hear about SPA? What made you decide to join?

Geoff: I first became aware of SPA (then Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population) around the mid-nineties as I was actively researching organisations focussed on population growth. I was aware of ZPG, and this probably led me to SPA (There was no Google option!) The decision to join was not a difficult one as SPA was the only organisation focussed on this critical issue. It comprised respected former politicians, academics and a very dedicated team. Even at that time, anybody that questioned population growth was vilified and considered "fringe". I still cannot fathom why the issue isn't of grave importance to everyone. I left the organisation around 2012 and the rejoined about 18 months ago as the advocacy levels ramped up and our engagement with the public intensified.

SPA: You have held various positions within SPA over the years, including the National Executive Committee and, most recently, one of our esteemed Social Media Coordinators. What can you say about our social media pages as an important tool for communication with the broader public?

Geoff: When we moved to Canberra, I was involved with the ACT branch for many years. We focussed on letter-boxing, lobbying activities, media engagement and the occasional stall. I joined the National Committee in 2010 in an effort to steer awareness campaigns more toward the public. By this stage, it was clear to me that mainstream politicians were the problem, not the solution. I recall during campaigning for the 2010 election, speaking with a senior Liberal staffer about immigration levels, he said to me "people will not wake up to this for another 10 -15 years". That left me outraged and served to reinforce my position.

Social media is the great information democratiser and a critical weapon in our arsenal. Traction on the issue will only come about with numbers. With numbers on our side, politicians take notice, media pick up on the issue and public interest starts to build. It has allowed us to communicate the issue in a rational manner and reach audiences through diverse platforms. Critically, it also provides us the opportunity to sanitise the issue and decouple it from the racism tag, an association that has plagued us since inception.

Meet our Members

SPA: Why do you believe SPA is an organisation worth supporting?

Geoff: Globally, SPA is a pre-eminent organisation on the issue of population growth. It has been tagged the "everything issue" for good reason. Population growth impacts on our environment and living standards. Globally, it has dire humanitarian consequences in many developing countries as high fertility rates serve to entrench

poverty and disadvantage. Much of this can be alleviated with improved access to reproductive healthcare, family planning and education for girls. These are all issues that SPA has long understood and advocated for.

You can follow SPA on our Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/population.org/>

You can also follow us on X, Instagram and LinkedIn.

SPA News

NSW: The NSW branch hosted the national AGM in Sydney on Saturday 26 April and the public meeting that followed. The AGM ran smoothly with the constitutional amendments passing without dissent. There was no need for a ballot for executive as nominations did not exceed the number of positions to be filled.

The title of the meeting was "Energy and Water: can supply keep up with rising demand?" We had three excellent speakers: Tim Buckley, director of Climate Energy Finance, on the issue of energy; and SPA VP Peter Cook and Jonathan Sobels on water. Peter and Jonathan were two of the four authors of SPA's discussion paper *Big Thirsty Australia*. They made a clear case that fresh water supplies would not keep pace with population-fuelled rising demand. Tim Buckley was more upbeat when it came to (renewable) energy meeting demand. See page 4 for a summary of Tim's main points.

Meanwhile, Graham Wood is putting the finishing touches to his book *Their future is in your hands* which will be published on a website before long. We'll keep you posted.

A branch AGM will be held soon. All members will be notified. We are looking for members to stand for committee. Please contact me on nsw@population.org.au if you would like to discuss.

Jenny Goldie

SA/NT: We held a successful talk with former Senator Rex Patrick on how to influence government. It was a mix of in-person and zoom with about 40 attendees.

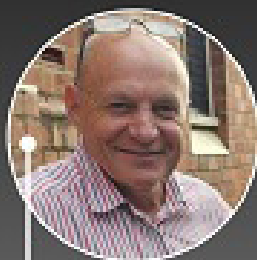
Our 2025 AGM saw the former committee returned with an additional member, resulting in six of us. Jonathan Sobels gave an excellent talk on *Big, Thirsty Australia* focussing on the dire situation of Adelaide's water supply with climate change and a predicted population increase of nearly 700,000 people, with the desalination plant already running at full capacity because of the drought in SA. Country people are running out of rainwater and bore water and have to pay to truck water in, even in the Adelaide Hills.

Energy and Water: Can Supply Keep Up with Rising Demand?

Hear three experts in their respective fields address the issues.
Open to All – Free & Live-Streamed.



Tim Buckley



Dr Jonathan Sobels



Dr Peter Cook

April 26, 2025
2:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Benedi House,
186 Glebe Point Road,
Glebe NSW 2037

SPA News

Stephen Morris gave two well attended and well received talks, one to Rotary Adelaide Light and one at Tea Tree Gully Eco Chats.

We held two stalls, one in the city at Fullarton Market, and one in a country town being subjected to a mass influx of people against the council's will - the state government took over planning some time ago and now councils are powerless to stop overdevelopment. We had good conversations at both, with most people supportive of our concern for the extinction of animals and plants due to human activity.

Stephen Morris and Mark Cramond are writing to authors who omit population growth from their articles when they really should include it, with the aim of educating and challenging them, including those from The Australia Institute, The Conversation, the SA Premier's Climate Change Council, Bob Brown Foundation, Climate Council, ACF, AYCC, GetUp!, and Liz Allen.

Robyn Wood, Stephen Morris, Mark Cramond

ACT: The ACT Branch has been quiet so far this year with just one committee meeting. Interesting guest speakers are always being sought to interest our members and members are invited to suggest names. We decided to spend money on new corflutes but had a disappointing response from members when we requested volunteers to erect them on major roads throughout the city. Our experience with the corflutes was mixed in different parts of the city with most erected in Belconnen, being knocked over, damaged or stolen. It is possible that the culprits mistakenly believed we have a racist agenda. Given the huge number of corflutes erected by the major parties throughout the city it is a moot point whether our small number of signs has any impact on voters. Indeed, it is possible that too many corflutes by any candidate could turn off voters.

A meeting was sought with the Executive Director, Centre for Population, Department of Treasury which gives advice to the Government on immigration and population matters. They have responded positively to our request and hopefully, we will meet the Director later in May.

Colin Lyons

VIC/TAS: The branch has been active in the election, conducting a political survey for candidates in Victoria and Tasmania. Responses were received from candidates in Braddon (TAS) and Dunkley (VIC), as well as a generic response from the LNP regarding migration cuts.

A recent social gathering in Fitzroy was successful, and we plan to continue these events. We are seeking leads for future speaking opportunities or stall events where the branch can have a presence. Please contact Daniel Webby at dan21012@gmail.com with any suggestions.

Daniel Webby

WA: We are holding our AGM on Saturday 17 May where we had hoped to have Prof Le Souef as the speaker but it seems as though that isn't going to happen. Instead we look forward to seeing the presentation that was given at last month's National AGM.

I will be attending Otto Mueller's Celebration of Life this Saturday 10 May. Quite a few people seem to think he was a scientist, maybe because he had a vast natural history knowledge that had been self-taught, or learnt by absorption from expert. For example, his entomological knowledge came from volunteering for ten or more years at the museum under the entomology curator. He had a bee named after him, amazing as it's not just a new species, but new subgenus. Species: *Leioproctus muelleri*. He joined SPA back when it was called AESP. He was not shy about spreading the message and had some big magnetic signage made up with his own slogan 'Overpopulation will bury Sustainability' for his BMW for many years. He helped in various ways including on the WA committee, writing many letters to the editor of various newspapers and recently doing a stint at the Hyde Park festival. Otto passed away peacefully on 17 March 2025, aged 95 years.

Judith Odgaard

Qld: On 1-3 May, I attended the Australian Earth Law Association conference "Ethical Futures for People and Planet" and presented a talk on "Reconciling human reproductive rights with rights of nature." It was well received and stimulated wide-ranging discussion. The Queensland branch is looking forward to running a stall at the Logan Eco Action Festival on 1 June.

Jane O'Sullivan



Otto Mueller

Is there an editor in the house?

Jenny Goldie is stepping down as editor of the SPA newsletter after the August edition. The national executive is seeking a replacement. It requires about three and a half days of concentrated work once a quarter plus monitoring of the media in between. If you are interested, please contact Jenny on editor@population.org.au or national secretary Sandra Kanck on secretary@population.org.au.

Unsung Hero Award

Nola Stewart

Nola Stewart was national minutes secretary of SPA for more than a decade until 2021 and a long-term member of the NSW branch committee. Her science degree in Chemistry and Diploma of Education led to 20 years of teaching science in Australia as well as teaching and writing science materials in Papua New Guinea beforehand.

In PNG, Nola set up a conservation society, for which she wrote its constitution. For her work connected with forest clear-felling issues she was invited as speaker to a UNESCO conference in Japan in 1984. She was also invited to train pastors in Uganda (September 2010) about "Caring for Creation", work she continues year by year through the 'Ecological Christian Organisation (ECO) Uganda'. Thanks to Nola, SPA now works closely with ECO, particularly its executive director Isaac Kabongo who has staffed our stall at several COP climate conferences.

Nola was invited to speak at an Oxford Symposium on Climate Change in 2014 and has spoken three times since at various Oxford symposiums.

Nola was convenor of the Nature Conservation Society of NSW 'Sustainable Population Working Group' for a number of years.

Finally, she was a generous donor to SPA. She is a deserved winner of the Mary E White Unsung Hero Award for 2025.



Book Excerpt

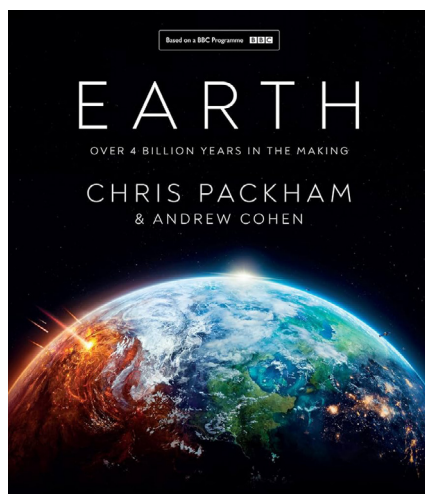
“Earth” by Chris Packham and Andrew Cohen

This beautiful book that arose out of the BBC-TV series, is the story of the Earth that formed 4.5 billion years ago. A half billion years later, life appeared on the once barren planet. Chris Packham, a Patron of UK-based Population Matters, is a naturalist, nature photographer, television presenter and author. While the book leaves out much of the hard hitting material that we saw in the final episode of the TV series, nevertheless, Packham writes towards its end:

“Ever since then (4 billion years ago), life has been in an endlessly complex interplay with the Earth. At times it looked as though it was conspiring to rid itself of this biological force; moments when it seemed that a frozen, choking or burning planet would return it to sterility, but it has never taken that final step and shaken off every last trace of life. At other times it's life that has had the upper hand, transforming the Earth and the atmosphere into a green and, at least for a while, a pleasant land when life was not just prolific, but wielded extraordinary power, only to witness once again how quickly millions of years of work can come undone. And now, one species with exceptional talents and exceptional flaws, finds itself in

exactly one of those moments, a moment where we hold immense power coupled with immense fragility.

“This is the human planet, a world that may be awesome but for me cannot be described as wondrous anymore. Not when the planet is so scarred by our actions, riddled



with the excesses of human consumption that continue to go unchecked despite the knowledge that we now all collectively hold. In the last few days of filming for the television series, we visited Mexico City, a vast metropolis of brick, concrete, steel and glass, not my sort of environment but an environment that cannot be ignored. Together with the 21 districts that radiate out across its 3000 square miles, this is home to more than 21 million people and, staggeringly, that only makes it the sixth biggest city on the planet by population. Across the world there are 30 other megacities, which are defined as cities with more than 10 million in-

habitants, and that number is only expected to grow ... [A]s they grow bigger they make huge demands on resources that rely on our ability to produce food with brutal efficiency, to feed millions of mouths.”

Heinberg Quote

Excerpt from *The evolution of modernity*

by Richard Heinberg

Perhaps it's helpful to think of the historical process of human cultural adaptation to environmental limits in slightly different terms. In the distant past, when a particular human group reached a limits crisis (usually with food), it had two options: *indigenise* or *colonise*. To indigenise meant adapting the group's population size and consumption behavior to levels that could be sustained given existing resources. To colonise meant moving elsewhere, taking over other groups' resources, or inventing ways to access resources that previously were inaccessible. No doubt circumstances and group history (and therefore mindset) predisposed each group toward one or the other strategy. Modernity marks the historical moment when the colonisers have taken over the whole world. But, having done so, they find themselves in a bind: there's nowhere else to colonise, the resources held by Indigenous peoples have mostly already been looted, and unexploited new resources (perhaps includ-

ing [thorium](#) or [geologic hydrogen](#)) are few and of questionable utility or accessibility. The only real long-term solution is for the colonisers to indigenise.

<https://mailchi.mp/b3c245a16299/museletter-384-the-evolution-of-modernity?e=bf739b315f>



About SPA

Website: www.population.org.au

The SPA newsletter is now published every three months: in February, May, August and November. Members are welcome to submit material to the editor, to be published at the editor's discretion.

Newsletter editor: Jenny Goldie

editor@population.org.au

Letters to editor welcome but 300 words maximum and in electronic form!

Membership applications and renewals should be done via the SPA website or sent to the national office. General inquiries should also go to the national office.

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