

# A Big Fix: Radical solutions for Australia's environmental crisis

*Ian Lowe*

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This is a little book hot off the press. Only a 116 pages in total. It is the third publication in The "Public Interest Series" that explores important public issues such as aspects of democracy and environmental and Indigenous issues in Australia.

The approach is one where he envisions where we want to go, and then explores how we get there.

Main topics covered are: Defining sustainability; the current environmental crisis in Australia; what the root causes are; and then how a sustainable society might operate and how changes made can be made to last.

Under all of these headings, a few concepts are introduced which certainly help to clarify and enlighten the reflective process of finding sustainable solutions to our current environmental headaches. One such example is found on p11 where the importance of our interference in the nitrogen cycle is explained and the warning sounds that our human use of nitrogen now exceeds the natural flows in nature (and also the reasons why we can't just focus on the carbon cycle).

Another example would be the five forces he identifies that underlie our social development and that have led to the problems we face. They are: "the growing human population, increasing consumption levels, our lifestyle choices, the technologies we use, and the pressures of the economic system" (p58-77)

I also like his argument that we need to concentrate on the quality of growth rather than the rate thereof and his focus on how we deal with decreasing resources such as oil and water.

Of interest to Christian readers will be his view (as a former Humanist of the year!) that we need to recognise that humans have a spiritual dimension. The risk coming from the Abrahamic religions (as he sees it) is one of an exploitation of creation based on the fundamental premise of the innate superiority of humanity. What is needed is "a new spirituality based on the rediscovered respect for nature" (p38)

Chapter 6 is the key part of the book. He spells out what he calls the attributes of a future sustainable society. It will be a HEALTHIER society.

**H**umane, **E**cocentric, **L**ong Time **H**orizon, **I**nformed, **E**fficient, and **R**esourced)

In my view his most controversial viewpoint is possibly the one where he argues strongly for limits to immigration based on the idea of what he calls "a stable population". Some might argue that this view could be seen as either naive, or a bit selfish (as a very privileged society), or both. Have a read for yourself (page 84-87, 106) and try to understand how he reconciles this with his argument in favour of greater equity for the world where 3 billion people live on less than the annual subsidy of the average European cow (p91-93).

This publication does offer a lot for such a small book. In that sense it is a good introduction to the multitude of environmental issues facing Australia today. Anyone reading it will feel introduced to the issues and enabled to search and read more.

If I had to be critical, I'd question the subtitle of this publication, "Radical solutions for Australia's environmental crisis". This book is not radical. The ideas and solutions proposed are not very radical. This is in reality quite a balanced book which introduces the relevant issues and contains a few "thought provokers" but it is certainly not going to rock the boat. Despite these criticisms it is certainly worth a read. A good place to start if you want to get into the debate! The reports and other publications quoted certainly provide clues to where some good reading awaits.

Chris Crause