

# The Tipping Point Alliance

## A Vision and Strategy for a Meaningful Life in a fracturing World

All documents temporarily on: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/alliance/alliance.html](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/alliance/alliance.html)

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# **A STRATEGY FOR AUSTRALIA**

## **AS A PRACTICAL TRANSLATION OF THE MANIFEST-OZ**

*Warning: the following text is only a first and temporary draft as a starting point for a discussion between grassroots movements. It will be re-written to come to an agreement that suits all participants. The text below is therefore only a first concrete proposal to help start the process of consensus. Yet remember: the purpose is not to write a beautiful text; it is to create a dynamic unity and together start a move towards change.*

The Vision describes the leading values (the human qualities that motivate us) and constitutes the core which expresses the unity between us. It is the WHY.

Let's now see how this core of values can translate for Australia into a specific movement of transformation that we can implement tomorrow. The choice is ours.

The OZ-Strategy describes the vision we want to implement. It is a list of actions to make real we our dreams. Without these guiding values (the Vision) and this wider vision of a creative perspective (the Strategy) we would have nothing but technical reasons to try to remedy the dangerous flaws of our time. It would not work effectively as these destructive flaws are not merely technical problems but mainly the visualisation of (i.e. making visible) the radical materialism, ego-centrism and inequity of our society, i.e. the sacrifice of our precious lives on the altar of overproduction and wealth accumulation. To this deadly perspective we want to oppose the vision of a creative life of care for one another and care for the Earth.

Although our many grassroots movements are very varied in their respective actions, they all try to address the diverse expressions of the same issues (materialism, ego-centrism, neoliberalism). We need therefore all together to coordinate our engagements in order to implement the new common world vision we agree upon. The Strategy is the platform where the different grassroots movements meet without losing their own specificity and personality. They brought together here to describe this wider creative vision. This is the YES TO, the WHAT FOR.

### **1 – Aboriginal land and people; a Makarrata Commission for truth-telling**

#### **The Uluru Statement from the Heart as a process that will bring us together**

The Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017) proposes a very clear strategy and positive spirit in how to (re)concile all Australian people, whether they are Aboriginal or not. As long as we do not address our common historical past and the injustice and suffering it has generated, there will be no peace and we will be unable to solve the many problems which are still hanging over us. They are linked with our incapacity to recognise the facts of the past. This untold past is indeed the real root of the present destruction of the environment, the ambiguous residual link with the mother country, the lack of integration into the Asia-Pacific, the lack of political independence, the lack of democratic processes, inherent racism and discrimination, of rejection of refugees, etc.. But more than anything else we have the urgent need to help all Australians; especially First Australians, in living a thriving life and expressing their culture fully.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart proposes a very constructive and positive approach: a *Makarrata Commission (the coming together after a struggle)* to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history. For the Uluru Statement, see: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/uluru-statement.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/uluru-statement.pdf).

#### **The land as the teacher and the root of our common humanity: rediscovering its deeper meaning**

Land rights of the First Australians must be respected and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has to be implemented fully. This means Aboriginal land to be under Aboriginal control,

traditional languages to be revived, traditional culture to find its expression in daily life, sacred knowledge to be transmitted to the younger generation. If not, such declarations of principles of recognition have no meaning. For the UNO Declaration of Indigenous rights, see:

[.www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/UNOindigenousright.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/UNOindigenousright.pdf)

When we accept that nature is not a heap of resources we can exploit at convenience and that we are indeed one with the place where we live, the land becomes the visualisation of our identity, of our relationships and of their future potential. When we learn to read the landscape we see in the land the traces of the past, of history and of our spiritual evolution. It is what Aboriginal people have done traditionally. The land becomes therefore, beyond ideology, metaphysics or religion, the place where we can meet, physically but also mentally, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually. The land becomes indeed the teacher of righteousness. If with the help of Aboriginal people we can rediscover together the true relation with the land as Country and as a living entity that nourishes us, teaches us and incarnates the forces that have shaped the land and fostered our ancestors, we will fundamentally transform the relation we have established with it and with one another. The land owns us more than we own it. Therefore talking about the land will bring us inevitably to truth-telling. For the proposal about the land, see:

[www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/two-insights-one-proposal.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/two-insights-one-proposal.pdf).

### **Resistance against supremacist white ideology, racism, discrimination and hate promotion**

Australia is still deeply ingrained in a supremacist ideology of domination by the white races. Politics and sport are mainly controlled by white males. It is urgent to resist this destructive discourse that despises other races and generates a dominance of a class that denies equal rights and responsibilities to black and brown people, and fosters a fear and hate of people from other origins or religions. This hateful talk is indeed the cause of much violence in our everyday life, from terrorism to exploitation, abuse and home violence.

## **2 - Climate change and the urgency to integrate our activities into natural cycles**

### **A call for an urgent return to simpler forms of life: simplicity, sharing and care for each other.**

Climate change calls for an urgent and radical change in ways of thinking and living in the next ten years. It is an absolute necessity under the threat of extinction. It is also an incredible opportunity to explore more human and just relationships and to implement forms of social living that are anchored in the relationship values of life and not dominating values of materialism and social control.

### **Integrating all our activities into the natural cycles that regulate Life**

Australia has one of the highest ecological footprints in the world. To remedy this form of madness we need first to integrate all our activities into natural cycles. It means that we only can consume resources at the speed the Earth renews them and we can only produce wastes at the speed the Earth absorbs them and transforms them into new resources that do not disturb the ecological equilibrium. It means we have to reduce drastically our ecological footprint. One cannot manage what one cannot measure; the future footprint must be equal or inferior to what our planet produces on average: i.e. the total production (biocapacity) divided by the number of people inhabiting our planet. There is no solution to climate change without rigorous social equity. Each human being has a right to an equitable share. And more radically: the process of integration and adaptation is not only a quantitative process (how much) but also and especially a qualitative process (how, in which way and in which spirit).

We must review fundamentally how we treat wastes in order to avoid the use of any materials that do not decompose (e.g. plastic) and we have to learn how to recycle everything. Packaging has to be rethought fundamentally as it should not be turned into waste. The concept of waste is in itself not acceptable if we want truly to succeed to integrate all our activities into natural cycles. To well manage wastes, we must select them at the source, i.e. avoid mixing them. Save water by installing composting toilets.

### **Restoring the main equilibrium of natural systems: atmosphere, soil, water, forests, rivers, etc.**

Australia is an especially fragile continent. The Earth is a living system linked with the Universe and animated by many complex processes that constantly compensate unbalanced effects. Atmosphere,

climate, soil, forests, rivers, oceans, glaciers, deserts, topography, biodiversity, etc. constitute as many interrelated systems which participate in maintaining, and impacting on, the general equilibrium of our planet. The sun is our main (and only) source of energy, as it is also the source of life and of all these other resources (plants, wood, fossil fuels, humus, wind, rain, etc.) that are nothing else than past accumulated sunlight. The cycle of water is the main process that undergirds all others; it is the source of life that shapes most part of the atmosphere, the soil, all sentient beings, rain, snow, forests, rivers, oceans, and our own bodies, as the key for any life development and transformation. We have completely disturbed these natural equilibrium systems; it is vital to restore their full potential. As far as it is still in our power it is urgent to repair the many damages we have caused to these systems. We need to do whatever we can to reconstitute their full power and to prevent any further damage to their integrity. It means reforestation, restoring water cycles and soil dynamic, protecting what remains, reintroducing lost species if possible, leaving fossil fuels in the ground, avoiding over-exploitation, etc. This radical mutation requires a fundamental transformation of our economy and ways of living.

### **Food, agriculture and landscape: the soil is a living system to be cared for**

Australia is a country that lives essentially on the primary sector of its natural resources. Our main relationship with the land is clearly expressing itself through agriculture. Nowadays food production has become an industry focused on a maximum of profit; a few giant international corporations are controlling most of the food sector and destroying the heritage of traditional agriculture. The soil is degrading and even the productivity decreases quickly as the Earth is exhausted and intoxicated. Most food is full of poisons as so many chemicals are used constantly as artificial fertilisers or weed and parasites killers. We urgently need to learn how to produce our food in harmony with the natural cycles without chemicals but only with addition of organic and natural components and to produce locally and in a sustainable way the food we consume in each region. We have to reduce drastically, if not abandon completely, the wasteful production of meat that causes so many damages to the soil and the forests. We have also to stop practising gene manipulation. The soil is a living system full of microorganisms that need to be fed. Only a healthy soil full of organic nutrients and worms, naturally enriched by organic growth, by the necessary nutrients or phosphorus and nitrogen, can produce a healthy food. The quality of such an agricultural production will help also each community (and especially the most vulnerable ones) to thrive and to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature (seasons, climate).

### **Sustainable energy as a community owned network of interrelated sources**

Australia is one of the highest consumers of energy per capita. The energy we consume has to become in future fully renewable. Australia is one of the very few countries in the world where there is an optimum exposition to solar energy (low latitude) and wind (strong contrasts of temperature). It is also, under these latitudes, the country which has best access to new technologies and especially to capital to be invested in the implementation of these new technologies. Australia has hence the best conditions to develop a network of interrelated renewable energy forms of production that would allow a good complementarity of different sources (solar, wind, geothermic) and the transfer from regions that can provide it to regions which need it, according to ever changing and alternating weather conditions. For the example of “out of river pumped hydro energy storage” see:

[www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/hydrostorage.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/hydrostorage.pdf).

The production of energy has to be split into small units that will produce locally and remain in the hands of the different local communities who can manage them democratically. The whole interconnecting network will then rely on a form of multiple contracts of cooperation based on mutual consent and not on a monopoly or concentration of power in the hands of a few powerful private (or even public) corporations. This horizontal form of social organisation and empowerment will show that we do not need big corporations. Everything that is vital can be done on the local or regional level, at small scale when in synchronicity with other communities.

Solar power has nowadays become financially very accessible. It is easy to install one's own system on the house roof, whether in stand-alone or connected to the grid. The main advantage of this solution is

decentralisation (no control by a single producer, avoidance of any heavy network for distribution) and it allows also for users to see clearly what is available (how much power in the batteries, how much water in the tanks) and how it has consequently to be used (when abundant it can even be fed back into the system!). The negative aspect is as yet our means of storage which depend on batteries whose production necessitates a heavy drain on resources. Storage is indeed the great challenge of renewable energy. The main challenge for sustainable energy is not production (quantity) but time (availability at the right moment)! See above about energy storage.

### **Putting an end to the systematic mining mentality that exploits minerals, forests and agriculture**

Australia lives mainly on the exportation of its natural resources. But this new perspective of integration into natural cycles and the use of renewable energy will fundamentally transform the role of the mining sector. Fossil fuels we have to leave in the ground. Necessary minerals we have already extracted can be recycled. It will also reduce our need for more. We have to remember that such minerals are not renewable. But what is even more essential is that we need urgently to abandon our attitude of unlimited mining. Mining is, in Australia, the trend that best describes our general attitude towards the land: we systematically mine the land (i.e. extract or exploit) for our mineral production, for forest industry, for agriculture. We are taking what is and selling it abroad without questioning how it fits (or rather does not fit) into natural cycles. This attitude of systematic mining is not sustainable and the land is dying. We need new ways to create jobs rather than simply taking and selling. This will definitely need to be the way of the future if we want to avoid losing our skills and creativity and exhausting the land for a rewards that do not match the value of what we destroy.

### **Technology as a servant and not a master: impact, meaning, purpose, adequate means**

The Anglo-Celtic civilisation, as an heir of the Industrial Revolution and of colonialism (the Empire), is very much focused on technology. Through our pragmatism technology is now a major source of meaning in our lives. It has become a daily guide and we think to solve any problem with more technology. We need to rediscover the use of technology without being under its power. It is indeed only a tool at our service, and not a controlling ideology. We have to review what our aims are, whether they are compatible with ethics, purpose and meaning (values), whether the chosen means are minimal (precaution) and adequate (simplicity), whether their impact is acceptable (integrated in cycles and generators of justice) and whether the result will be useful, truthful and beautiful.

### **Conversion of our personal way of living and calculation of ecological footprint**

As ordinary people we are the only actors (corporations depend on their clients, governments on their electors) and it is on a personal level first that we have to implement the change we want to see. By our lack of integration into natural cycles and especially by our overproduction and over-consumption, what is happening is very bad news; the good news is that we may become the solution if we want to. When we see and recognise this fundamental truth and we dare to act on it, our action will take on a social dimension, but not before we vote with our feet and change our ways. Each one of us has to reduce our own footprint in consciously changing our own behaviour. A personal form of engagement to do so will create a chain reaction that will soon put governments and corporations under pressure to conform to this new will and perspective. For the proposal about changed ways of living and the calculation of the footprint, see:

<http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/changewayandfootprint.pdf>.

## **3 – A democratic culture of consent**

### **Democracy as the power of expression for minorities and the capacity for true public debate**

New ways of life imply new ways of taking decisions. As we wish everyone to have their say we need to develop a new culture that understands democracy not as an institution but as a process of maturity and consent. Democracy is not the domination of the majority over the other half or of the major economic interests over the majority of people but it is an ability to let everyone influence the evolution of their

community and to create a space for every minority to be able to express themselves. This is truly a bottom up movement not only of expression but also of search for the truth and for the best ways to live in the truth. This is basically a learning process of public debate where everyone has a say and is respected for what they say, because the diversity of our community is indeed our wealth.

### **From a colonial system by decrees to a true democracy of respect of diversity and minorities**

The political life in Australia is still strongly marked by its colonial past. The custom of governing by decrees is still today very strong. How many decisions are taken by our government in an authoritarian way, in contradiction with the law: treatment of refugees, border guard force, imprisonment, racial or gender or social discrimination, etc., very often also in complete contradiction to international agreements and treaties? The three constitutional powers (executive, legislative, judiciary) are not really independent one from another as the government is formed by members of parliament and proposals by the executive are discussed by the same people, supported by their party members. In a truly independent system the government has to be a distinct corpus that proposes projects to the parliament which will debate on them independently and freely, even if the same political parties or opinions are represented. In a similar way the judiciary power has to be also independent of parliament and able to criticise what does not conform to legislation. The electoral procedure with the two party system, especially with one single candidate to be elected in each electoral ward - the winner takes all - prevents minorities (even as high as 49%!) to be represented, while, by contrast, a proportional representation of voters (many elected MPs in larger wards) allows each tendency to be proportionally active in parliament. Yet democracy is much more than a constitutional institution; it is a culture which needs to be alive, it means practised among all people in a spirit of free debate and mutual respect for everyone in the pursuit of the common good. About the colonial system in Australia and democracy, see: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/colony.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/colony.pdf)

### **A state at the service of its citizens**

Practically it means that, in Australia, we need to rethink the election system in order to make it more representative of minorities; we may regroup electoral wards into bigger ones in a way that will allow them to be at the same time small enough to be representative of local conditions that are different for each ward (e.g. city, country, coast, etc.) and yet big enough to be represented by many MPs (at least 10 if possible) so that minorities (as high as 10%) can also be represented in parliament, proportionally to the diversity of opinions in the given population of each ward. We need also to have a separate election for the government, i.e. for the prime minister, independently of parliament, so that parliament can be fully independent of government and play its own role of regulator. In what concerns public services we need more transparency and to get a direct access to the person in charge of the files that concern us. It means each instruction or decision should be accompanied by the name of the person in charge and by a direct phone number. About the election system in Australia, see: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/elections.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/elections.pdf) and [../electionscalcul.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/electionscalcul.pdf)

### **The best competence is to be found at the lowest (most local) level**

Political life in Australia happens nowadays mainly at the federal and state levels, i.e. far from everyday life of most people. Our social common destiny becomes therefore the specialised job of professionals; political debate and decisions transform into something that is indeed very remote from local life. If we want ordinary citizens and grassroots movements to be more involved in the process of learning about, and the shaping of our society, we need as many decisions as possible to be taken at the local level. It means that we have to create a truly democratic power on the level of the local community (there is no local parliament at present time and no form of direct democracy) which would treat each issue at its most local possible level. This development of a more basic and direct form of democracy does not exclude any higher levels of coordination that could be more competent for more general issues or topics that need overview on a wider area such as state or nation (transport, research, security, foreign affairs, etc). This would allow issues and problems to be more visible. It is also locally that the most competent people can be found to confront the problems of everyday life and who often know the necessary

solutions. Citizens can become more aware of their own empowerment and of their influence on issues that concern them directly. The tax system has then evidently to be reviewed in the same perspective in order to provide the necessary financial means at this local level.

### **From exploitation and domination to empowerment, debate, consent and consensus**

We can observe nowadays that most important decisions are usually taken by the people in power, and the consequences are imposed on the rest of us, regardless of such things as the slow destruction of our natural or social environment: pollution, climate change, unemployment, delocalisation, overproduction, competition, concentration of wealth, migration, violence, etc. To oppose this tendency we need to develop our own empowerment and become the main actors as citizens, workers and consumers. Nothing indeed should be done without us all. We need to develop therefore a strategy of consent nourished by a capacity for debate in diversity where we learn to integrate all minorities and to agree one with another. Consensus is the necessary condition to form a coherent community that is able to shape its own future and destiny. Consensus seems to be an unreachable aim but it is indeed nothing other than the capacity to agree on main issues on the local level, knowing that what is not included in the consensus will be managed by external forces in their own interest, i.e. at the disadvantage of the local community. Consensus is never something pure; it is simply the most advanced compromise where each participant learns to let go of what is not primordial and fundamental in order for common ground about essential issues to be found.

### **Freedom of information, free media and open public debate**

Media in Australia are mainly in the hand of News Corp which controls most of the newspapers and TV channels. The level of media in Australia is extremely poor. There are very few (if any) newspapers or TV channels that offer broader information about international news and are able to animate a public debate about the issues that challenge our society. The ABC, that does assume this function, is now under threat by a conservative government that does not accept the role of media to practise a wide freedom of information and comment. Any confrontation about Aboriginal issues, refugees, climate change, terrorism, etc. becomes easily loaded with a political intention that excludes any open discussion of content. This requirement for freedom and openness questions the form of ownership of these media. The radio is presently a much better model for this kind of pluralistic approach than the written press. We need urgently newspapers, TV channels and radio programs that can offer this opportunity for open discussion about our present and future. Before words become tools for expression, they are tools for investigation and the search for truth and the building of bridges to find reciprocal understanding and even consensus. We need to create links of respect and solidarity (even if we do not agree fully); and to resist forces that generate fear, violence and humiliation. This requirement for truth seeking, respectful debate and social resilience will provide an important lead to rethink the role and the practice of social media; it is urgent to prevent this tool, rich in potential, to degenerate into a means that promotes precisely the contrary today of what we need: treachery self-promotion, cruel bullying of the other, spreading of unverified or (intentionally manipulated) false news and ideas, social pressure for inadequate (anti-)conformism, support for extreme ideologies, etc. A form of control is necessary (how?) to make this tool truly convivial.

### **Think global, act local; our own well-being depends on the well-being of our community**

Think local, act global: this is an old slogan that says clearly that everything happens mainly on the local level but that local decisions require nevertheless some broader and more general awareness of the problems on a general level. The great change of mind consists in growing from an egocentric perception of life into a hetero-centric understanding of how much we are interrelated and interdependent. Our personal well-being depends indeed on the well-being of our community, whether it is on the local, on the regional or on the national level, not to speak of the whole dimension of humanity that represents indeed our true nature.

## **4 – The economy at the service of, and controlled by, society**

### **Neoliberalism as the cause of many of the most acute problems of our time**

The market, in our western modern capitalist society, has become the ruling force, since the industrial revolution but even more since the 80s (Reagan and Thatcher era). Neoliberalism and globalisation have made of the market the main argument for, on one hand, dismantling the protective functions of the welfare state (social security, redistribution of wealth, care for the weaker, values of equity, health, education for all, etc.) and for, on the other hand, opening our exchanges to ever more competition in order to extend the range of the market and to find new outlets for overproduction. Profit as a core motivation has replaced our sense of creativity and the common sense of utility in what we produce. We produce mainly to make money, and not to satisfy basic needs or to develop relationships of empathy and understanding! As we can observe, this trend for wealth accumulation in the hands of a narrow minority is the cause for most of the suffering in the world: globalisation that kills local forms of subsistence, climate change by excess of consumption of resources and energy, austerity measures, military interventions in foreign states in order to ensure access to mineral resources (fossil fuels) and to control trends of independence against dominant powers. It is indeed “simple” to save our world: we “just” need to choose to care for one another and the Earth and to share what we have.

### **The Commons as the common wealth produced by all and accessible for all**

Most goods are provided freely by nature (the Earth), especially on a continent as rich in natural resources as Australia: life, air, water, nature, minerals, energy, etc. Our work is only an added value that makes these resources more accessible or transforms them into more adequate forms to be used. We do not produce; we only transform what is given. It is the same with social goods: knowledge, care, compassion, hospitality, generosity, justice, peace, etc. are qualities we learn and receive from society. The more we share these qualities and resources the more they develop, extend and take shape, and the more they become accessible for all. These essential resources are all parts of the Commons, which constitute the common property that is generated by all and that nobody should be able to own or manipulate. Neoliberalism is precisely the contrary trend that wants to appropriate to itself these common goods (as patents, know-how, use of natural equilibrium and resources, of workforce, creativity, etc.) while not taking upon itself the responsibilities that are linked with social and reciprocal interaction; it is what one calls the privatisation of profits and the socialisation of charges when the state is made responsible for compensating for all damages caused by private corporations (pollution, unemployment, poverty, etc.) and for providing all services which are necessary for everyday life (infrastructure, education, health, social security, etc.). If we want to reverse this destructive trend we have to reconstitute these Commons and learn how to make them accessible while yet protecting their fragility (precisely because of their accessibility) from any attempt by a third party to control them. In this way it becomes evident that accessibility to goods and knowledge (i.e. use) is much more important than ownership (i.e. accumulation): the more we share, the more goods and wealth circulate and the more they become accessible and enrich everyone.

### **Rehabilitate work; produce / buy locally; training for youth in small businesses built on skills**

Our present economic system is dominated by interests geared to profit and accumulation. Overproduction is the mother of globalisation which is the mother of competition, delocalisation and degradation of our local conditions of subsistence. The antidote consists in producing and buying locally. It means first to rehabilitate work as a creative activity that links people, and not just as a painful source of income. And to protect the conditions in which work can thrive: equitable wages, social welfare, trade unions, security, etc. Work is everything: it includes at the same time subsistence, maintenance, care, creativity, art, relationships, sharing, leisure activity, shadow work, bedtime story telling, etc. This truer understanding has to translate into the development of small local workshops or businesses that will produce the necessary goods and services at small scale (no more gigantic corporations where workers are anonymous cogs): the production of such small workshops (into which even larger necessary chains of production could be integrated) would be appropriate in proportion to the

needs of the local market. This would allow activity at a human scale where each one sees what they do and feels rewarded and recognised for it. In small workshops skills can be developed; it is indeed the role of the local community to train its youth and offer them a quality of life, an inspiring perspective, a new world vision as well as a rich education and possibilities to express their creativity; when we delocalise activities or buy Chinese, we not only buy bad quality that has been produced in degrading social and ecological conditions, but we destroy also at the same time our own capacity for production and our network of knowledge, know-how and human relationships of local interdependence as well as the future of our youth. It is why producing locally means also buying locally, it means consciously not to buy Chinese, not to buy imported goods and not to buy over the internet. This is a drastic but important choice: it will be slower and dearer, but it is the price we have to pay for protecting a local quality of life and keeping it alive: prices are then more equitable (no exploitation, no hidden unpaid charges, care for the environment, etc.) and the money remains local and can circulate in many successive exchanges for the thriving of the activities of local people. In compensation of these higher prices, wages are also higher because they are no longer under the pressure of artificial competition (as with free market and globalisation). This means that some protections of the local economy must be implemented. It is common sense that the Malian farmer should not be in competition with the world market, with the American farmer, for the production of cotton: the former lives in an arid country with only his simple tools while the latter receives state subsidies for the use of his powerful machines in a much more clement climate. Such a form of competition is a mere absurdity!

### **Protectionism of local ecological and social conditions through labels of quality**

In order to establish a better equity between producers of different countries in what concerns the conditions of production, work and protection of the environment, the most effective form of protectionism consists probably in defining standards of quality for the imported (and local) goods and services. In creating labels of quality, as they already exist for Fair-Trade, Forest Stewardship and others, a form of falsified competition would be prevented where some other agents can dominate the market because their products are produced much more cheaply because of conditions that do not respect basic rules of ecological protection or social welfare. Such quality labels should be defined on a national level or, better, on an international level. This system generates evidently the necessity for checking the validity of these labels through direct inspections of production conditions at the source. But this necessity to validate the label would be also probably a necessary condition for the label to be attributed. This could be done by an international institution that would be trustworthy. This system works for fair-trade and for forest management. There is no reason why it would not work for other categories and other aspects of good production. And instead of being used only for encouraging fair consumption these labels could become also constraining rules for selecting the most favourable imported goods.

### **Protectionism through a better control of balance of trade (Keynes)**

One of the most damaging aspects of international trade is that it participates in general in concentrating wealth into a few nations and in a few hands, upsetting in this way the general balance of wealth distribution and draining wealth from poor countries to rich countries. This is the best way to progressively and slowly kill the goose with the golden eggs! After WW2, the British economist JM Keynes, at Bretton Woods, had proposed an ingenious system how to balance trade exchanges between nations by a mechanism that would heavily tax excesses in exchanges (surpluses) in order to encourage nations to bring back these exchanges to a better balance. This was what he proposed to call the International Clearing Union. The Americans opposed the project and the IMF and the World Bank took shape finally without considering this essential question of balance of trade. What does it mean for Australia? It invites us to come back to a similar system (in its spirit and intention) to ensure a better equity in our international exchanges. It would encourage local production instead of export, and especially export of natural resources, particularly if drastic labels of quality may be defining the minimum quality of what can be imported, reducing in this way the import of bad quality and minimising also (by balance effect) the export of precious resources that should be used in priority for local production.

For more details about Keynes and the International Clearing union, see: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/clearing-union.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/clearing-union.pdf)

### **Protectionism because of the diversity of conditions, balanced by a wider human solidarity**

Beyond the practical aspects of the system, it is important to understand that, whether as label of quality or as import restriction, any form of protectionism does not mean imprisonment or rejection of external relationships. Protectionism is only a flexible and ever adaptable barrier that controls the way resources, goods and capital circulate. It intends to protect the weak from domination by the more powerful. This form of protection does not restrict human relationships: exchanges are not prevented; solidarity with the others remains fully possible. Strangers and refugees can still be welcome, racial equality can be practised, freedom of mobility can be guaranteed for people. This depends on the maturity of each local or regional community to implement this form of welcoming for other human beings to the degree they wish. Migrations have always been the source of great enrichment. The fear of strangers, which the far-right is trying to foster today, is not based on facts but only on manipulation of feelings of fear that intends to gain more control and power over people's lives. We observe the negative trend in hospitality, in a spirit of extreme materialism: capital and goods circulate freely while people (migrants) are rejected. Inhuman! Off-shore treatment of refugees must be dismantled. Applications for asylum must be treated as quickly as possible. Conditions for accommodation of migrants must be warm and human in order to heal the traumas of the past.

### **A protected public space free of advertisements and brand influences**

Especially if we want to reduce our level of consumption in order to adapt fully to natural cycles, it is urgent to come back to a form of satisfaction of our essential needs that is not defined by the power of main corporations (advertisement, fashion) but that can be rooted in our true personal perceptions and freedom to be who we are. Nowadays advertisements are invading the whole public space and shaping it at the convenience of dominant corporations and economic interests under the blackmail that they finance part of these public activities. The invasion of media, education, health by so-called sponsors completely reoriented the purpose of these sectors to bind them to private interests at the cost of their true original function which consists in providing people with the necessary means for their thriving. In order to protect our freedom of conscience and of choice we need then to protect the whole public space from this powerful intrusion. This is especially the case for health and education and this protection should even be extended to the public space as such (squares, streets, public buildings) and even media. We should even dare to forbid any form of free advertisement; publicity should be confined to special places where, if one wish to, one could get the form of tendentious information it provides. This form of radical protection will of course inevitably question the ways we can finance these sectors of activities in order to compensate for the loss of sponsorship (as it has always been the case previously). It will challenge us to come back to public form of financing that can be defined by criteria of authenticity and independence, in true and mature social consensus.

### **Education, health as public services based on a wholesome understanding of humanity**

If we want the common to thrive, the quality of education and health services needs to be optimum. These services have to be free of charge and to support each member of the community in their effort to acquire a good education or to get the necessary health support they need. Health services need to be a form of integral medicine that would integrate all aspects of the person into the concept of health, with a complementarity of different approaches including alternative medicine. This means a new understanding of health that is based on the general balance of the person and not only on partial repairs, or focused on organs as single parts, using chemicals or surgery as the only means. Our understanding of humanity as a whole process of transformation of living people into greater maturity and creativity will transform the way we form our specialists in their fields. This means also a new understanding of what education means if it is to be no longer aimed at providing the necessary cogs for the present speculative economic system. The thriving of persons becomes then the main focus of our care and attention, instead of profit.

## **A restorative justice based on reconciliation and nonviolence**

The role of prison and the criteria for incarceration need to be reviewed fundamentally. Justice should not be punitive but as much as possible restorative, i.e. it should provide the means for an improvement of life conditions, behaviours and skills of inmates. Trials must aim at reconciliation and telling the truth instead of being based on antagonism or confrontation; nonviolence has to be the fundamental practice that rules our relationships, whether at the personal or collective level. We may also let ourselves be inspired by Aboriginal practices in terms of justice where a council of elders decides how each case has to be treated and a contract is established with the culprit.

## **Transports as a sustainable network of relationships; the territory as our new potential**

In a similar way, if our economic exchanges are fundamentally transformed, our mobility needs also to be rethought radically, accepting that it is a precious privilege that has to be used with restraint for the common good and not for the needs of the market. Centrality and the balance between cities and country as well as between rich and poor regions have to be re-examined drastically and brought back to equilibrium. New means of public transport need to be designed, based on sustainable energies and aimed at implementing a wide network understood as a public service (aimed at meeting people's needs and not for profit), designed as an equitable network that does not privilege the centre of power. The territory on which we live powerfully reveals the image of present and future potential relationships and exchanges, and the common creativity that it is making possible. It demonstrates how any form of near proximity opens new doors for a future based on authentic exchanges and cooperation between people.

The use of planes has to be systematically abolished except for a very restricted use for emergencies. Planes are indeed the tools for standardisation and globalisation. They are one of the main causes of the climatic debt by producing incredible quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> in the most fragile layers of our atmosphere. They kill diversity and destroy indigenous people and cultures.

Infrastructure joint with the Commons creates infinite links between people. Without these links we would not be able to do anything. It is a truth that has been forgotten when we falsely believe that our well-being depends on the productivity of corporations. That is the opposite to what is true: we do not need corporations; but they need the links we create as a network of lively communities, i.e. infrastructure, social relationships, knowledge, compassion, respect, etc. The link and the relationship come first, not the product.

It would be fascinating to produce simple solar cars in small workshops as described above, i.e. some very light vehicles (sorts of rickshaws) that will work only on solar energy. Such vehicles will offer mobility only when the conditions will be optimum; this will be a revolution in the way we understand our needs for mobility and it will transform radically our excessive identification with our car that is so strong in Australia. Our use of it is nowadays so intense that cars are one of the main sources of CO<sub>2</sub> in Australia. About the solar car, see: [www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/solarcar.pdf](http://www.desertcreekhouse.com.au/texts/solarcar.pdf)

## **5 – A financial system that excludes speculation and cares for the general good**

The great question is how to finance such a conversion of our means of production and of our ways of living. There are many possibilities:

### **Cut all antisocial expenses**

The first thing to do is to cut all expenses that do not serve the common good: subsidies to all types of destructive activities, military expenses, wars, repressive forms of detention, support to dictatorships in order to ensure our access to natural resources, all investments in harmful activities, mining that does not respect sustainability, GMO, pesticides, etc. As complementary measure a severe carbon tax should be reintroduced. Polluter pays.

## **Stop speculation, limit interest rate, abolish stock exchange**

Most wealth today does not come from work but from investment of capital. Rich people get richer because their wealth can produce more wealth. This is a deep injustice of our financial system: speculation is rewarded although it does not produce anything. One can get rich while one sleeps. In an alternative spirit accumulated wealth could be used for the general good in order to compensate differences of wealth instead of increasing them. There needs to be therefore a limit to profit on investment: the maximum interest rate to be equal to the index of the general cost of living or not more than one per cent higher. The stock exchange has to be abolished because it steals from common wealth (compensation for work and common knowledge) what is then offered to private profit (dividends); this is an extreme injustice that drains the Commons from the real potential we need for a true and urgent re-conversion.

In order to restrain speculation a tax on transactions (Tobin tax) can be established if such transactions occur.

## **Disinvest from big corporations and banks, reinvest in small local businesses**

People who have some savings or a small amount of capital may disinvest it from all corporations that have a negative impact on the general balance and level of equity of society or on our natural environment: all fossil fuels corporations, main food monopolies, gene technology, chemical industry, weapons producers, etc. When they have retrieved their capital they may invest it in small local businesses. The interest rate will certainly be minimum (index + 1%?) but it will serve the public interest and the real dividend will not be in cash but in quality of life that will serve everyone including the persons who have invested.

## **Tax the rich**

We need to regulate bank activities strictly. Banks have to be controlled or even to be owned by the state or by local communities. The transfer of capital and interest rates must be controlled and limited.

Tax havens must be dismantled and prevented through international agreements. Tax evasion is one of the major ways common wealth escapes from public use. Retrieving these lost taxes will finance all our needs for a healthy and wide re-conversion.

The “trickle down” principle that says that wealth finally reaches the poorest strata of society when the rich get richer is evidently a great lie. We may observe that it is exactly the contrary that happens. Therefore the rich must be taxed drastically, in order to retrieve the maximum possible capital to finance public services for the public good. An equal society is always more thriving than an unequal one. Everybody profits from sharing; this is the basic law of classic economy: when goods circulate more easily and quickly, more people get enriched (materially and spiritually). This is not a top-down mechanistic process but a circular organic economy, which needs to be organic and circular in order to be sustainable. Equity, care and reciprocity are the keys.