

LEADERSHIP FORUM 2020

**A BURNING WORLD:
A CATALYST FOR
GENERATIONAL CHANGE
OR APOCALYPSE?**

Tuesday 25 February 2020

National Convention Centre, Canberra

A BURNING WORLD: A CATALYST FOR GENERATIONAL CHANGE OR APOCALYPSE?

Overview

Sustainability and climate change are THE major challenges in contemporary corporate governance. How is your university responding to this rapid shift in community sentiment and activism? Do your students and alumni have a voice in your institutional response?

This Leadership Forum will lead the debate about how can we advance our university engagement agenda in the context of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Speakers

Dr Emma Camp, marine biogeochemist at the University of Technology Sydney, and a United Nations Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals, National Geographic Explorer and a 2019 Rolex Associate Laureate.

Emma researches and advocates for the world's marine life under threat from environmental and climate change. An ocean explorer, Camp has discovered natural populations of super tolerant corals, which she is researching to better understand how corals may survive into the future. Emma is an advocate for Women in STEM and improved Climate Action – attending the 2019 United Nations Climate Summit in New York. Emma has won numerous research awards for her work, including the British Ecological Societies Early Career research Award (2018) and was named a 2019 New South Wales Tall Poppy.

Dr Billy Osteen is the Associate Professor of Community Engagement at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand.

This position came about after thousands of Canterbury students provided help across the city following the devastating 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. Billy gave students the opportunity to connect their service with academic content and critical reflection through the creation of a service-learning course, CHCH101: Rebuilding Christchurch. The course has been taken by over 1,000 students who have contributed more than 30,000 hours to the recovery of the city. In addition, the course has been adapted and used as an academic response to other disasters around the world.

Duncan Ross, Chief Data Officer, Times Higher Education.

Joining us from the UK via video conference (in an effort to keep airmiles down) to speak about the UN SDGs which will be a major focus for this year. Duncan oversees the team that generates university rankings at THE and last year launched their University Impact Ranking based on the UN's SDGs.

Dr Geoff Scott, Emeritus Professor of Higher Education and Sustainability at Western Sydney University, Australia.

From 2004-12 he was Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) and Executive Director of Sustainability at WSU. During this time he led a range of successful external quality audits and established the United Nations' endorsed Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – Greater Western Sydney (RCE-GWS) which now has over 25 regional partners.

WSU was ranked No.1 in Australia in the Times Higher Impact ranking based on the UN SDGs in 2019.

Dr Jessica Weir is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University, and a Visiting Fellow at the Fenner School, ANU.

She investigates human-environment relations, justice, societal norms and public sector governance. Her research practice is fundamentally informed by her collaborations with Indigenous peoples in southern and western Australia. Dr Weir currently leads and co-leads two projects funded by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). She has held positions as Research Fellow at the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS 2007-2012), and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Canberra (2012-13), and in 2011 founded the AIATSIS Centre for Land and Water Research.

Chair of the Session

Professor Jim Nyland, Chair of Engagement Australia and Associate Vice Chancellor, Australian Catholic University.

MC

Callista Thillou, Deputy Chair of Engagement Australia and Executive Director, Office of Communication, Marketing and Engagement, Flinders University.

Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development



* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

A burning world: a catalyst for generational change or apocalypse?

Professor James Nyland

Introduction

It is noteworthy how far we have come in defining and shaping a concept of engagement. Universities in Australia are helping to build the future, in partnership with others across the globe also, as part of a new economic and social order. The scope of issues and themes they are dealing with is literally breath-taking. From the intellectual issues of a post-truth world to cities and communities of the future Australia and from action strategies for economic development to the meaning of civic life – there are insightful and hopefully controversial and stimulating debates and ideas put before those involved in university engagement ... and the general public. Ideas tested in healthy and open debate and put into the public domain are the lifeblood of democratic engagement. Engagement Australia has been immersed in this culture of debate and challenge.

So far so good. We have an array of vital issues before us each one of which is significant in itself. The contributions selected for discussion will help us to think through difficult challenges and reach decisions in our 'heimat' – our own place and locality and culture where it will be meaningful - or not ! This is exactly the point in having debates. We should test the limits of understanding and get new illuminations from arguing the case, defending our beliefs and meeting the strongest arguments of our opponents. It is vital that we do not all agree, whilst providing the open platform for knowledge creation and exchange that 'engagement' demands. This is EA's unique role. So much for the process of dialogue and discourse, vital as that is.

However, in looking at the array of matters we are debating it is clear that we are immersed in processes and experiences in the here-and-now which we only partially understand and recognise. Yet there is a transformation taking place right now and we are part of it. Such transformations can take place below the horizon of awareness. It is possible to be unaware of the meaning and significance of what is right before our eyes. Yet there is one theme which we surely can no longer ignore. It is the one that asserts that the planet itself is in dire circumstances and its future existence as our home and heimat is now threatened. If we continue to destroy our natural environment and to pollute our seas, rivers, landscapes and forests we shall destroy our very means of existence. If we continue to lower our horizon of knowledge and awareness we shall reap the harvest of self- destruction. There is a **GREAT TRANSFORMATION TO COME** and our journal discussions, researches and publications within the Engagement Australia 'family' are an indicator of its presence and of an emerging reality which is now a pressing force which will not be denied.

This transformation is already underway and it is evolving under the pressure of and in response to perhaps six key themes dealt with below, each of which is an aspect of a single and unifying concept – that of **SUSTAINABILITY** of the Earth's climate and environment . Though the processes of engagement are vital, if we ignore or diminish the meaning of the **CONTENT** of the crisis we face we shall be lost and eventually our life and environment will be destroyed by the effects of our own actions. The fact is that the Earth's resources are being rapidly depleted and abused as a rapacious capitalism, accountable to no authoritative global institution in any democratic way we can presently conceive, exploits its capacity to extract and distribute immensely damaging productive forces.

Averting the disaster

There are many things to be done to avert the impending disaster and many of these must necessarily be done by those in government and industry. Those at the coal-face will have to close the coal faces. However, there are things we can do to change awareness and consciousness, bearing in mind that our context of Engagement brings its own specific challenges.

First, we must visualise change and for this we must recognise that a change of values and behaviour must evolve. Even where values are held to be 'unchangeable' and universal they must be challenged. Equity and fairness as well as autonomy and self-determination must be the keynote for a sustainable world- a world which is now globalised and interdependent economically. Second, we must acknowledge the sustainable goals for the 'wicked issues'. Poverty reduction, hunger amelioration, equal health chances, decent work, responsible consumption, climate change action, sustainable cities and social justice are all listed as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations.

This is a world issue of which we are a part, right here and now and right here in your home town. This is a 'heimat' issue for each community and neighbourhood across the globe. No-one can afford to ignore the challenge because it is quite simply coming your way.

Third, we need a new social contract which is not rooted in the fundamental idea of a self-regulating market which may only have needed trade deals between the great global economies to be effective. The old idea that somehow markets could be dis-embedded from the old institutions of a society and operate independently must be challenged. That the growth of the world economy has left behind vast areas and many, many millions of people is the great challenge of economic sustainability. Education is the third largest generator of GDP in Australia and has a vital economic role to play and we do well to ask of it- how will you help the new social contract to succeed?

Fourth, the new social contract requires a social debate in which we can address the structural issues of economic change and regeneration, the issues of climate change and carbon emissions, the impact of global migrations in response to environmental degradation, global warming , sea-level changes and the need to equalise power. Voluntarism, the role of 'third sector' economic actors, co-operativism and a 'responsible capitalism', accountable for its depredations and environmental destructions is envisaged. The social debate will require new ways of seeing and new ways of conceptualising the problems we face. We shall need to have critical thinking embedded in our curricula and a new approach to learning for adaptability and survival in a changing and threatening world.

Fifth, we need to acknowledge that place will continue to play a vital role in our future even though we shall be interconnected globally. Care for the land and for cultural landscapes should be central to our concerns and be as much the focus for investment and social innovation as the metropolitan centres. Governance and leadership is at issue here and it needs to change!

Sixth, the great transformation underway beneath our feet is also and simultaneously a technological and digital revolution. Knowledge has exploded into availability and the knowledge industry seems to be part of everyone's future. We have yet to fully understand the implications and consequences of this and the jury is out on whether we are to be 'liberated' or 'imprisoned' in our digitalised futures.

What is clear though is that we are unlikely to succeed in engagement without having a new conception of how knowledge is organised and owned and controlled. For this we need new approaches to the curriculum which are open and critical; we need to be active subjects in this and not merely the objectives and consumers of a technology and content made somewhere else.

Can we seize back the debate?

If we are now living in the 'anthropocene age ' (Gaia Vince 2014) where the mass extinction of species as a result of human activity is an impending possibility , we need to move beyond the idea of self-regulating markets and neo-liberal economics. The accelerating climate crisis is destroying our means of future existence; it is an existential crisis rather than a crisis of business investment choices in which we find ourselves. The anthropocene age is the time when we may be in an irreversible and destructive degradation of our planetary resources, including our human environments. The ever-worsening truths can no longer be simply ignored. The science now needs a cultural and social interrogation of the new realities and new alternatives are the only solution (Findlay and Findlay 2019). This is surely an agenda beyond all others for Engagement Australia? The universities are the best repositories of knowledge and critique and it is time for them to use their resources for the benefit of planetary survival. What could be more important for those of us employed to think and teach and research? Can we seize back the debate by recovering the learning spirit and critical thinking many associate with our universities (Nyland and Davies 2018 and 2019) ?



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The importance of sustainable development

Climate catastrophe, a loss of trust in institutions, the growth of public and private anxiety and the failure of an economy devoted to a narrow focus on growth, regardless of its true cost are the challenges facing us at the end of the second decade of this century. All of the themes dealt with in this article are embedded within the concerns of Engagement Australia and all of them are in effect 'hypotheses' to be tested, debated and changed as we try to define and solve problems together. What cannot be denied, we believe, is the proposition that the great transformation to come is underway and that the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a rubric within which our work can be coherent and focussed and thus help us achieve a truly transformative idea of university engagement.

A stable and equitable future can best be built on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders in 2015. These goals address the challenges of climate crisis, poverty, environmental degradation and the deadline to achieve them is only 10 years away!

According to the secretary general of the United Nations Antonio Guterres, in spite of some lessening of world poverty and better access to decent work and energy the world is seriously off-track in meeting the goals. "Hunger is rising, half the world's people lack basic education and healthcare, women face discrimination and disadvantage everywhere." (Guterres 2019).

Sustainable development will require both private businesses and public authorities to find new ways forward for investment in renewable clean energy and food sources. Guterres is one of those who puts faith in the capacity of business to address many of the needs for a low-carbon economy. Sustainability may not be incommensurate with competitiveness and the ever growing global economy devoted to growth. It is surely an act of faith, however, rather than one rooted in evidence that it is ethically possible and makes good business sense to invest in sustainable equitable development.

At this increasingly late stage in the climate debate and facing a world that burns, there is undeniably a question of urgency and the need for reform and change. The fossil-fuel age is coming to an end and we must end the war with the natural world that has fuelled our economies for generations. We all live in a place; we all seek a heimat where our cultural identity is tied in to our ecological identity; these things we value must be fought for and defended if we are to have a future. Nothing could or should be more engaging.

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Strength from perpetual grief:
how Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis

Strength from perpetual grief: how Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis

How do you support people forever attached to a landscape after an inferno tears through their homelands: decimating native food sources, burning through ancient scarred trees and destroying ancestral and totemic plants and animals?

The fact is, the experience of Aboriginal peoples in the fire crisis engulfing much of Australia is vastly different to non-Indigenous peoples.

Colonial legacies of eradication, dispossession, assimilation and racism continue to impact the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples. Added to this is the widespread exclusion of our peoples from accessing and managing traditional homelands. These factors compound the trauma of these unprecedented fires.

As Australia picks up the pieces from these fires, it's more important than ever to understand the unique grief Aboriginal peoples experience. Only through this understanding can effective strategies be put in place to support our communities to recover.

Perpetual grief

Aboriginal peoples live with a sense of perpetual grief. It stems from the as-yet-unresolved matter of the invasion and subsequent colonisation of our homelands.

While there are many instances of colonial trauma inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples – including the removal of children and the suppression of culture, ceremony and language – dispossession of Country remains paramount. Dispossessing people of their lands is a hallmark of colonisation.

Australian laws have changed to partially return Aboriginal peoples' lands and waters, and Aboriginal people have made their best efforts to advocate for more effective management of Country. But despite this, the majority of our peoples have been consigned to the margins in managing our homelands. Aboriginal people have watched on and been ignored as homelands have been mismanaged and neglected.

Oliver Costello is chief executive of Firesticks Alliance, an Indigenous-led network that aims to re-invigorate cultural burning. As he puts it:

Since colonisation, many Indigenous people have been removed from their land, and their cultural fire management practices have been constrained by authorities, informed by Western views of fire and land management.

In this way, settler-colonialism is not historical, but a lived experience. And the growing reality of climate change adds to these anxieties.

It's also important to recognise that our people grieve not only for our communities, but for our non-human relations. Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity comes from the land.

As such, Aboriginal cultural lives and livelihoods continue to be tied to the land, including landscape features such as waterholes, valleys and mountains, as well as native animals and plants.

The decimation caused by the fires deeply impacts the existence of Aboriginal peoples and in the most severely hit areas, threatens Aboriginal groups as distinct cultural beings attached to the land. As The Guardian's Indigenous affairs editor Lorena Allam recently wrote:

Like you, I've watched in anguish and horror as fire lays waste to precious Yuin land, taking everything with it – lives, homes, animals, trees – but for First Nations people it is also burning up our memories, our sacred places, all the things which make us who we are.

For Aboriginal people then, who live with the trauma of dispossession and neglect and now, the trauma of catastrophic fire, our grief is immeasurably different to that of non-Indigenous people.

Bushfire recovery must consider culture

As we come to terms with the fires' devastation, Australia must turn its gaze to recovery. The field of community recovery offers valuable insights into how groups of people can come together and move forward after disasters.

But an examination of research and commentary in this area reveals how poorly non-Indigenous Australia (and indeed, the international field of community recovery) understands the needs of Aboriginal people.

The definition of "community" is not explicitly addressed, and thus is taken as a single socio-cultural group of people. But research in Australia and overseas has demonstrated that for Aboriginal people, healing from trauma – whether historical or contemporary – is a cultural and spiritual process and inherently tied to land.

The culture-neutral standpoint in community recovery research as yet does not acknowledge these differences. Without considering the historical, political and cultural contexts that continue to define the lives of Aboriginal peoples, responses to the crisis may be inadequate and inappropriate.

Resilience in the face of ongoing trauma

The long-term effects of colonisation has meant Aboriginal communities are (for better or worse) accustomed to living with catastrophic changes to their societies and lands, adjusting and adapting to keep functioning.

Experts consider these resilience traits as integral for communities to survive and recover from natural disasters. In this way, the resilience of Aboriginal communities fashioned through centuries of colonisation, coupled with adequate support, means Aboriginal communities in fire-affected areas are well placed to not only recover, but to do so quickly. This is a salient lesson for agencies and other non-government organisations entrusted to lead the disaster recovery process. The community characteristics that enable effective and timely community recovery, such as close social links and shared histories, already exist in the Aboriginal communities affected.

Moving forward

The agency in charge of leading the recovery in bushfire-affected areas must begin respectfully and appropriately. And they must be equipped with the basic knowledge of our peoples' different circumstances.

It's important to note this isn't "special treatment". Instead, it recognises that policy and practice must be fit-for-purpose and, at the very least, not do further harm.

If agencies and non-government organisations responsible for leading the recovery from these fires aren't well-prepared, they risk inflicting new trauma on Aboriginal communities.

The National Disability Insurance Agency offers an example of how to engage with Aboriginal people in culturally sensitive ways. This includes thinking about Country, culture and community, and working with each community's values and customs to establish respectful, trusting relationships.

The new bushfire recovery agency must use a similar strategy. This would acknowledge both the historical experiences of Aboriginal peoples and our inherent strengths as communities that have not only survived, but remain connected to our homelands. In this way, perhaps the bushfire crisis might have some positive longer-term outcomes, opening new doors to collaboration with Aboriginal people, drawing on our strengths and values and prioritising our unique interests.

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Leading The Engagement Agenda

Engagement Australia champions the unique role universities have with society to address contemporary global challenges and trends through teaching, learning, research and partnerships.

We do this by:

- Providing and inspiring leadership;
- Developing capacity and future leaders;
- Enabling peer-learning;
- Providing practical tools and tips; and
- Providing a platform for collaboration and knowledge creation.

Engagement Australia supports the wider contextual standard definition of community engagement, previously developed by the US-based Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, which has succeeded in codifying the core characteristics and principles of community engagement. It defines Community engagement as a method of teaching, learning and research that describes interactions between universities and their communities (business, industry, government, NGOs, and other groups) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.

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ENGAGEMENT AUSTRALIA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2020

(Previously the BHERT awards)

The Engagement Australia Excellence Awards identify and celebrate the most exciting and impactful engagement activities undertaken by Australian universities.

This new Excellence Award program replaces the former BHERT Awards for Higher Education collaboration in Australia. Winners of BHERT Awards over the last 22 years have been outstanding nation-building initiatives, demonstrating far-reaching impact and innovation, in all sectors and aspects of the Australian economy and community. The Engagement Australia Excellence Awards will continue BHERT's focus on collaboration, and build on the reputation established by BHERT for recognition of innovation and excellence.

Guidelines

Eligibility guidelines for the Engagement Australia-BHERT Awards:

- Any collaborative programs or projects involving one or more tertiary education institution, and one or more industry, community or government partner.
- The roles of each party in the collaborative process must be clearly outlined.
- Industry partners can be publicly or privately owned companies, while federal, state and government departments, statutory authorities, industry associations, unions, not-for-profits and recognised community organisations can be included as partners.
- In addition to universities, tertiary education institutions may also include business schools or accredited higher education programmes.
- Non-winning projects can be resubmitted in subsequent years however winning projects are not eligible for an Engagement Australia Award in subsequent years.
- Applications are eligible if there is evidence of a genuine collaboration underpinning their work and if the project had produced impactful results.

Award Categories

Award for Excellence Community Engagement
Award for Excellence in Community Engagement: Closing the Gap
Award for Excellence in Industry Engagement
Award for Outstanding Engagement for Research Impact
Award for Excellence in Student Engagement
Award for Excellence in Alumni Engagement
Award for Outstanding Leadership in Engagement

Award timings

The Engagement Australia Excellence Awards program will open mid-March and the Engagement Australia website will host the Awards Program Criteria details, and the online portal managed by eAwards.

The Awards will be presented at the Engagement Australia Annual Conference in October 2020.



**EXCELLENCE
AWARDS 2020**

