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## Soils For Life

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Monday 18 May 2015 4:40PM

It's time to talk about soil because if we don't we could face a very serious problem. The world needs to double sustainable food production by 2050 to feed a projected population increase of 9 billion people.

This means that food security is one of the world's most pressing problems. People need access to food, there needs to be enough for everyone and it needs to be nutritional and affordable. Soil is essential for food security so we need look after it so it can remain healthy so we can all be healthy. So how do you make healthy soil?

IMAGE: BEETALOO STATION IS WORKING WITH SOILS FOR LIFE TO MAKE THEIR SOIL HEALTHY. (DANIEL FITZGERALD/ABC)

**Monday 4pm**  
**Presented by** Amanda Vanstone

**IN THIS PROGRAM**

Monday 18 May 2015

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Australia update  
4:05 PM

Gen NBN  
4:20 PM

Soils For Life  
4:40 PM

<http://www.abc.net.au/radnational/programs/counterpoint/soils-for-life/6472556>

## Soils: The 'neglected' resource?



by **Amado S. Tolentino, Jr.**

AS early as 1980, UN's Environmental Law Program encouraged and promoted the development of legislation in the field of soil conservation. Except for FAO's Soil Charter (1981) and a few regional agreements, little has been done to address the use of soils on the basis of sound principles of resource management to enhance soil productivity, to prevent soil erosion and degradation and to reduce the loss of good farmlands to non-farming purposes.

The Soils Atlas 2015 identified various reasons for the increasing loss of land and soils, i.e. "cities and roads are spreading, heavy agricultural machinery compacts the ground, and pesticides and fertilizers decimate soil organisms. In addition, there is wind and water erosion." Specifically, agricultural production in many countries has not met the demand of the burgeoning population because of soil loss through accelerated degradation arising out of such processes as salinization, progressive leaching and acidification, loss of organic matter and of soil structure, waterlogging or by pollution from agricultural run-off resulting from the uncontrolled use of pesticides and other dangerous chemicals.

To start with, decision-making regarding soil

**Ambassador Amado Tolentino, Jr.** participated in the formulation and progressive development of UNEPs Montevideo (Environmental Law) Programme as well as the Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development.



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>

## 7 ways environmentalists have had it wrong

Sara Phillips ABC Environment 18 May 2015



In the future, we may all live in clean, technologically advanced cities. *Credit: NASA*

A new vision for the future has been released by some of the world's leading environmental thinkers. But many of its suggestions are likely to be confronting for today's environmentalists.

A GRAND NEW VISION for how humans can exist on this planet without destroying the lives and homes of the creatures with which we share it has been published by some of the most noted environmental thinkers alive today.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/05/18/4220842.htm>

## Christine Clarke: Agricultural success in Valley starts with healthy soil

By CHRISTINE CLARKE

Monday, 20 April 2015

(Published in print: Tuesday, April 21, 2015)

NORTHAMPTON — Eighty years ago, on April 14, 1935, an ominous wall of blowing sand and dust swept across the Great Plains on a day that came to be known as Black Sunday.

During the 1930s, the Dust Bowl days saw huge dust storms ravage the Midwest because of years of overplanting, poorly managed crops and severe drought.

During that massive storm in 1935, people were forced to crawl on their hands and knees in search of shelter, literally unable to see their hands in front of their faces. Cars stalled and stopped in the choking dust. Many thought the end of the world had come.

In response to Black Sunday, and to the damage caused by dust storms, Congress passed Public Law 74-46 on April 27, 1935, and recognized that “the wastage of soil and moisture resources on farm, grazing, and forest lands ... is a menace to the national welfare.”

This law established the Soil Conservation Service, now the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. Since that time, our commitment to soil science and soil health has helped America’s private landowners implement conservation practices that protect and improve soil and other resources.



**Christine Clarke** is the state conservationist for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Massachusetts. She is based in Amherst. <http://www.gazettenet.com/home/16588632-95/christine-clarke-agricultural-success-in-valley-starts-with-healthy-soil>

## No soil, no life - in praise of dirt

By LAWRENCE WINSHIP Gazette Contributing Writer

One of my favorite Pioneer Valley bumper stickers proclaims: "No Farms, No Food!"

Perhaps we should modify this slogan by adding: "And No Soil, No Farms!"

Of course, farms can't function without soil. But I'll go much further. Nothing else can function without soil, either. Soil is much more than a place for our crops to grow: It is the foundation for human civilization. Productive, healthy soils, support food production, but also the life of all the terrestrial and wetland systems that provide essential ecosystem services — for nature itself! And those services make possible all life, including our own. For the most part, though, we're unaware of the part that soil plays in our daily existence.

**Lawrence J. Winship**, a member of the Hitchcock Center board, is a professor of botany in the School of Natural Science and director of the Southwest Studies Program at Hampshire College. <http://www.gazettenet.com/home/2049626-95/soil-soils-center-experience>

## Storing carbon in soil: potential opportunities outweigh limits

### AUTHORS



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Associate Professor in Soil Modelling at University of Sydney



**Alex McBratney**  
Professor of Soil Science at University of Sydney

### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Budiman Minasny receives funding from Australian Research Council Linkage program.

Alex McBratney receives funding from the Australian Research Council and Crains Research & Development Corporation.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

Provides funding as a Member of The Conversation AU.  
sydney.edu.au

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It's expensive to apply nitrogen fertilizer, but there are other ways to store carbon in soils. [Jagjit Singh](#)

For several years, and particularly since the advent of the Coalition's **Direct Action policy** for reducing emissions, the potential of agricultural soils in Australia to soak up carbon has been widely debated. Proponents argue that soils can sequester a large amount of carbon and farmers should be encouraged to, and recognised for, managing their soil to increase this possibility. Others argue soils cannot do the job.



<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/ron-tandberg-20090910-fixc.html>

## Maybe we are all climate change deniers

By Rebecca Reid Gazette Contributing Writer

If you're anything like me, you're a walking contradiction.

I understand climate change and what causes it; I read articles about sea level rise, catastrophic drought and the probability of climate refugees, hunger and planetary strife. I deeply understand what we (I) are doing to our only home. I don't think I'm immune to the suffering that will result.

**Rebecca Reid** is a co-editor of the *Earth Matters* column and the former Hitchcock Center photographer. The book discussed here is "*Don't Even Think About it: Why Our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*" by George Marshall, published in 2014 by Bloomsbury. It is available from local libraries and bookstores, as well as online booksellers. This is the second of a three-part series on climate change. The first essay, discussing the impacts of climate change in the Northeast, appeared on March 14; the third, about climate action, will be published on 23 May.

<http://www.hitchcockcenter.org/earth-matters/994/>

## The future of agriculture; we must all be ecologists

By LAWRENCE J. WINSHIP Gazette Contributing Writer



PHOTO BY REBECCA REID



In the autumn, as our neighbors fill their grain bins with barley, and their cellars with potatoes, I am always amazed at their productivity. What a long, interesting journey we and our food plants have taken.

Yet farms are a relatively recent feature of the landscape in the long evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens*. Our ancestors carved fields out of natural ecosystems with human and draft-animal energy and with powerful forces like fire.

On our farm, dense stands of spruce trees come right up to the field edges. The “tension zone” between trees and crops is evident on every walk. It’s obvious which group of plants would overtake the other without human intervention. Hundreds of acres of abandoned farmland, now covered by thick forests of pine, oak, maple and spruce attest to the resurgent vitality of seeds, stumps and sprouts.

***Lawrence J. Winship***, a former member of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment board, is a professor of botany in the School of Natural Science and director of the Southwest studies program at Hampshire College in Amherst. <http://www.hitchcockcenter.org/earth-matters/the-future-of-agriculture-we-must-all-be-ecologists/>



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## Demystifying sustainability

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Sunday 12 April 2015 7:45AM

Environmental scientist and author Haydn Washington just published a book called *Demystifying Sustainability*. Much has been said about sustainability, but what does it all mean? Haydn Washington aims to demystify sustainability, so that the lay person can understand what the issues are.





IMAGE: BY 2050 THE WORLD POPULATION IS PREDICTED TO BE OVER 9 BILLION PEOPLE




**Sundays 7:45am**  
Presented by Robyn Williams

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/demystifying-sustainability/6377398>

19 May 2016, 6:04am AEST

## The budget harks back to old ideas for northern Australia


**AUTHOR**



**Andrew Campbell**  
Director, Research Institute for Environment and Sustainability, Charles Darwin University

**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

The Research Institute for the Environment and Sustainability receives funding from a wide range of government and industry sources and is a partner in several large collaborative environmental research initiatives across northern Australia.



Possible funding in A Member of The Conversation All  
this includes


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RMIT University

Course Administration Officer  
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Lecturer in Probability Theory And Stochastic Processes  
University of Melbourne

Head of School (School of Software)  
University of Technology Sydney



Looking over Fannydale and the Gulf Arm of Darwin Harbour to the new \$66 billion LNG plant. Many resources projects in the north are in search of environmentally important places. Andrew Campbell, author provided

Treasurer Joe Hockey's **announcement** of a \$65 billion Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility in last week's budget has been met with **cynicism** in the media.

Bernard Keane writing on **Crikey** argued "the Infrastructure Prime Minister's" second budget containing no worthwhile new infrastructure investment outside a northern Australia boondoggle fund".

<http://theconversation.com/the-budget-harks-back-to-old-ideas-for-northern-australia-41817>

# The State We're In: Protect soil on preserved farms

By **Warren Reporter**

on May 17, 2015 at 7:05 PM



Straddling Mott Road in Frelinghuysen Township, Warren County, is a jewel of a property notable for its vernal habitat, limestone forest, endangered species habitat and ability to support water recharge. Pictured is the Gerson Conservation Easement generously donated by Benjamin Gerson. (courtesy photo)

**By Michele S. Byers***Executive Director* It's hard to overstate the value of healthy soil on a planet whose population is 7.3 billion people ... and counting.

*Topsoil is the rich upper layer of soil where most nutrients and organic materials are found. The vegetables and fruits we eat - and the green pastures and grazing lands for cattle, dairy herds and other animals - would not exist without it.*

*You may have seen signs and bumper stickers proclaiming, "No farms, no food." They could just as easily say, "No soil, no food."*

[http://www.nj.com/warrenreporter/index.ssf/2015/05/the\\_state\\_were\\_in\\_protect\\_soil.html](http://www.nj.com/warrenreporter/index.ssf/2015/05/the_state_were_in_protect_soil.html)






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## Benchmarking theories

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Sunday 19 April 2015 7:45AM

Benchmarking has become a management buzzword over the years. Frank Szanto, a mechanical engineer from Sydney, wonders if we could leverage the techniques of benchmarking to get optimal outcomes in other areas of human endeavour, like scientific theories. He attempts to try benchmarking on two theories which revolutionised our understanding of our place in the universe.



IMAGE: BENCHMARKING HAS BECOME A MANAGEMENT SLITZ WORD OVER THE YEARS. (GETTY IMAGES/PAUL BRADBURY)



**Sundays 7:45am**  
**Presented by Robyn Williams**

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/benchmarking-theories/6392148>

## OPINION: Preserved farms still need protection — for soil

Michele S. Byers 12:07 a.m. EDT 18 May 2015



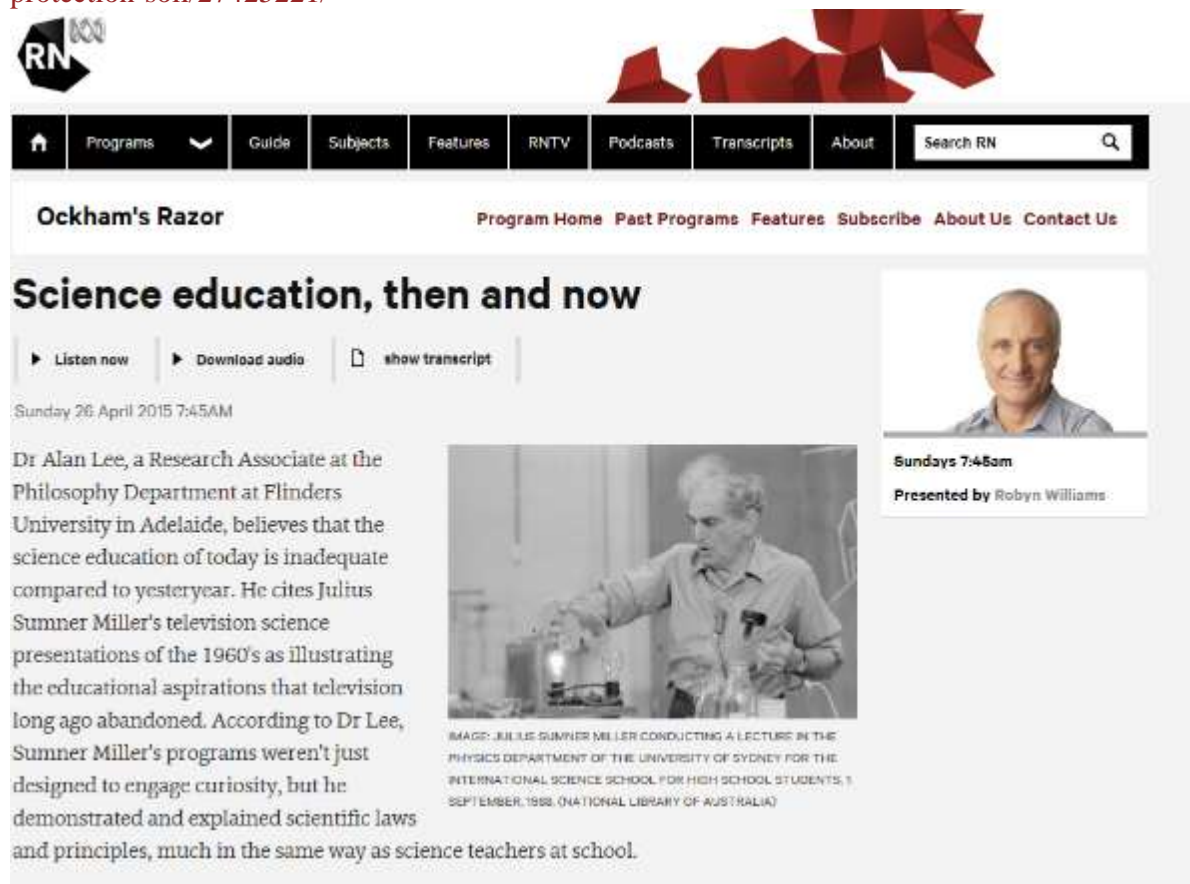
It's hard to overstate the value of healthy soil on a planet whose population is 7.3 billion people ... and counting.

Topsoil is the rich upper layer of soil where most nutrients and organic materials are found. The vegetables and fruits we eat — and the green pastures and grazing lands for cattle, dairy herds and other animals — would not exist without it.

You may have seen signs and bumper stickers proclaiming, “No farms, no food.” They could just as easily say, “No soil, no food.”

**Michele S. Byers** is executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

<http://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/opinion/readers/2015/05/18/preserved-farms-still-need-protection-soil/27425221/>



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## Science education, then and now

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio ▶ show transcript

Sunday 26 April 2015 7:45AM

Dr Alan Lee, a Research Associate at the Philosophy Department at Flinders University in Adelaide, believes that the science education of today is inadequate compared to yesteryear. He cites Julius Sumner Miller's television science presentations of the 1960's as illustrating the educational aspirations that television long ago abandoned. According to Dr Lee, Sumner Miller's programs weren't just designed to engage curiosity, but he demonstrated and explained scientific laws and principles, much in the same way as science teachers at school.

IMAGE: JULIUS SUMNER MILLER CONDUCTING A LECTURE IN THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE SCHOOL FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, 1 SEPTEMBER, 1988. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA)

Sundays 7:45am  
Presented by Robyn Williams

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/how-has-science-education-changed/6412490>

## Queensland drought: it's not just graziers looking to the skies for answers

OPINION

By ABC's **Blythe Moore**

Posted about 4 hours ago Tue 19 May 2015, 10:39am



**Photo:** Drought landscape near Longreach ([Blythe Moore](#))

*The rains will come to Longreach eventually, but the question is whether the drought will break before the people in this outback Queensland town do, writes Blythe Moore.*

When I first pulled in to Longreach in August 2012 to take up a job with ABC Western Queensland, I didn't know much about the bush. In fact, I'd never even met a cattle grazier before.

But suddenly graziers were everywhere I looked, walking around town in their neatly pressed shirts, shiny belt buckles and new hats.

[Blythe Moore](#) is a cross-media reporter for ABC Western Queensland and ABC North West Queensland

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-19/moore-longreach-drought-looking-to-the-skies-for-answers/6479968>

The screenshot shows the ABC Radio National website interface. At the top is the RN logo and a navigation bar with links for Home, Programs, Guide, Subjects, Features, RNTV, Podcasts, Transcripts, and About, along with a search bar. Below this is the program title 'Ockham's Razor' with sub-links for Program Home, Past Programs, Features, Subscribe, About Us, and Contact Us. The main headline is 'The rise of basic science in China'. Below the headline are links for 'Download audio' and 'show transcript'. The date 'Sunday 22 March 2015 3:45AM' is displayed. The main text begins with 'Dr James Tickner, a senior researcher with the CSIRO in Canberra, has visited China a number of times during the last eight years and discovered that that country has had an astonishing growth in science. According to him China's huge investment in both basic and applied science together with her political and economic drive to push ideas out of the lab and into commercial reality contrasts starkly with the fragmented approach to research and innovation adopted by many Western countries.' To the right of the text is a portrait of a man, identified as 'Sunday 7:45am Presented by Robyn Williams'. Below the text is a photo of a group of people, with a caption that reads 'BASIC: JAMES TICKNER AND Y. LIU WITH SOME OF THE CHINESE 'PURE MATTER' TEAM'.



<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/the-rise-of-basic-science-in-china/6328688>

## Budget 2015: An assault on Australia's climate programs

*John Connor ABC Environment 13 May 2015*



The budget assumes emissions will continue as they have, but at the same time dismantles programs like ARENA, which are helping to keep them down.

Last night's budget ignores the global reality that climate change is happening and other countries are moving to address it. It's a liability for our future.

AS THE TREASURER was finalising his Budget speech yesterday, the World Bank released a report on *Decarbonising Development: Three Steps to a Zero Carbon Future* ([pdf](#)) and our Bureau of Meteorology announced that **El Nino was back** — a big problem for Australia as global warming puts our already extreme weather on steroids.

*John Connor is chief executive of the Climate Institute.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/05/13/4234917.htm>

## Budget 2015: No surprises for environment sector; \$702 million to spend on projects over next few years

Analysis by national environment and science reporter **Jake Sturmer**

Posted Thu at 10:55am Thu 14 May 2015, 10:55am



**Photo:** The environment sector will have \$702 million available to spend on projects over the next few years.

There were few major surprises in the environment portfolio in this year's federal budget, which was something of a relief to environmentalists shell shocked by last year's cuts.

Some of that extra \$100 million has come from a \$73.2 million cut to the Green Army program, which aims to get 17 to 24-year-olds working on projects including revegetating river catchments, constructing boardwalks, pest animal management, monitoring threatened species and koala habitat restoration. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-14/few-budget-surprises-for-environment-portfolio/6468932>

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## Kim Williams on science and the arts

▶ Listen now ▶ Download audio [ ] show transcript

Sunday 17 May 2015 7:45AM

Kim Williams has reached a remarkable level of achievement. First as an learned man of music, film and broadcasting, and secondly through his appointments - chairing the board of the Sydney Opera House, running Foxtel, CEO of News Corp, the list goes on.

Williams also has strong views on Australian culture, the Gonski report, and science education.

**Sundays 7-45am**  
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IMAGE: KIM WILLIAMS VIEWS SCIENCE EDUCATION AS ESSENTIAL (GETTY IMAGES)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/kim-williams-arts-and-science-funding/6466314>

## How China's energy is becoming more green than black

BY JOHN A. MATHEWS AND HAO TAN

ABC Environment | 12 MAY 2015

 Comments (5)

**Far from playing catch up, China is leap-frogging the technology that drove the Industrial Revolution in the West and channelling investment into clean energy.**

CHINA GENERATES most of its electricity by burning fossil fuels, just as every rising economic power has done since the Industrial Revolution. But to focus on this single fact risks overlooking a notable trend. The Chinese system of power generation is turning green — far more quickly than any other system of comparable size on the planet.

This trend is visible in three areas. The first is electricity



China's coal industry is gradually being surpassed by clean energy.

<http://www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2015/05/12/4233710.htm>



## Worried about education? Get stuck in and change it

Zoe Williams



We need new tactics to challenge the Conservatives on their schools policy. Here's where we should start



✎ 'The government's determination to blame schools for every poor outcome has reached the point of neurosis.'  
Illustration: Robert G Fresson

"It's time to stop schools failing our children," wrote the education secretary in the *Sunday Telegraph*; and what better way to do so than to sack the headteacher, as she suggests? There is no working definition of what Nicky Morgan calls a "coasting" school, nor any obvious stream of heads who can replace the ones she plans to kick out.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/may/17/worried-education-schools-policy>

## The environmental impact of creation

By **Ian Plimer** - posted Monday, 20 April 2015

In the beginning God floated the idea of creating Heaven and Earth. He was immediately served with an injunction by Greenpeace to prevent any creative activity whatsoever as He had not undertaken an environmental impact study and had no permit to work.



At the court hearing, God was cross-examined and asked why He wanted to undertake this massive project, especially as it appeared that it was extremely unlikely that any social benefit would derive from His venture. The Wilderness Society reminded God that His Bible stated that "the earth was void and empty and darkness was upon the face of the deep" hence the area where He wanted to creatively meddle could be classified as a pristine wilderness. God successfully argued that, unless Earth could be seen, then it could not be classified a wilderness area. Upon

further questioning, God revealed that by Him saying “Let there be light” the wilderness area could be seen for assessment of its environmental value.

**Ian Plimer** is emeritus professor of earth sciences at the University of Melbourne and professor of mining geology at the University of Adelaide.

<http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17274>

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## Managing the water needs of future Australian cities

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Sunday 5 April 2015 7:45AM

Future cities will need to be much more water sensitive than they are today, according to Dr Steven Kenway from the University of Queensland. The Australian Bureau of Statistics expects that Australia's population will be about 42 million by 2060 and most of the growth will be in our cities and towns. As the population rises, water efficiency will need to double or low-energy water supplies must be found. Dr Kenway's research focuses on how the concept of urban metabolism can help us find solutions to these challenges.





IMAGE: WE WILL HAVE TO FIND WAYS TO MEET OUR GROWING DEMAND FOR WATER. (GETTY IMAGES)

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<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/ockhamsrazor/managing-the-water-needs-of-future-australian-cities/6362618>

19 May 2015, 6:04am AEST

## Accidents, waste and weapons: nuclear power isn't worth the risks

### AUTHOR



**Mark Diesendorf**

Associate Professor and Deputy Director, Institute of Environmental Studies, UNSW at UNSW Australia

### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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The Fukushima disaster was a dark chapter for nuclear power – but high-profile accidents are far from the only downside.  
STANBETAG/GETTY IMAGES

This article is part of The Conversation's worldwide series on the Future of Nuclear. You can read the rest of the series [here](#), and a counterpoint to the views expressed in this article [here](#).

<http://theconversation.com/accidents-waste-and-weapons-nuclear-power-isnt-worth-the-risks-41522>

19 May 2015, 11:11am AEST

## The case for nuclear power – despite the risks

### AUTHOR



**Gary Wise**

Professor of Nuclear Engineering and Radiological Sciences at University of Michigan

### DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Gary Wise does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.

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RMIT University

Course Administration Officer  
Monash University



SB Chipping the spending of existing nuclear plants in the US, it being extended far beyond their expected life. [James Hansen](#)  
Reuters/Chris Wedel

This article is part of The Conversation's worldwide series on the Future of Nuclear. You can read the rest of the series [here](#), and a counterpoint to the views expressed in this article [here](#).

<http://theconversation.com/the-case-for-nuclear-power-despite-the-risks-41552>





<http://www.smh.com.au/photogallery/federal-politics/cartoons/cathy-wilcox-20090909-fhd6.html>



**“An expert is a person who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field.”**

— [Niels Bohr](#)