



Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.

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HOPE E-news Bulletin 2023 #01 --- January 2023

The following items have been gathered from various e: newsletters received by HOPE in recent times; and/or prepared specifically by HOPE members and supporters. If you have any news to contribute, please forward to office@hopeaustralia.org.au . Deadline for articles is 15th day of the month.

Editorial

Welcome everyone to the first issue of 2023!

In this month's issue, we explore the degradation of our resources which particularly affects food security for populations. We present articles from our volunteer researchers which discuss how our resources can be restored through caring for our farmland, public land, and waterways.

With the new year upon us, it is a good time to renew aims to inspire people to live sustainably in their homes and communities. We discuss ways to improve the health of the Australian agricultural landscape, to enhance productivity, and guarantee a food-secure nation with sustainable farming communities.

Regards,

Daniela Dal'Castel, Newsletter Editor – HOPE Inc.

2023 Environmental Observances

2023 UN International Year of Observance

International Year of Millets - [N2105789.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/observances/millet-2023)

UN International Decades of Observance

- 2014–2024 [United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All](#)
- 2015–2024 [International Decade for People of African Descent](#)
- 2016–2025 Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa - [UNITED](#)
- 2016–2025 [United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition](#)
- 2018–2027 Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty - [N1746762.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/observances/eradication-of-poverty-2018-2027)
- 2018–2028 [International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development"](#)
- 2019–2028 [United Nations Decade of Family Farming](#)
- 2019–2028 [Nelson Mandela Decade of Peace](#)
- 2021–2030 [United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development](#)
- 2021–2030 [United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#)
- 2021–2030 [United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing](#)
- 2021–2030 Second Decade of Action for Road Safety - [N2022630.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/en/observances/road-safety-2021-2030)
- 2022–2032 [International Decade of Indigenous Languages](#)

2023 Calendar Events

February

- 2 [World Wetlands Day](#)
- 10-11 [International Day of Women & Girls in Science](#)
- 11 **HOPE Ordinary Meeting, Toowoomba Qld (Both physical & ZOOM)**
-- Topic: Food for thought – What does the future of HOPE look like?

Feature Article

Restoring degraded farmlands

Written by Lauren Dogan, HOPE Researcher NSW



Farmlands are possibly the most crucial ecosystems to sustain human life and currently cover more than one-third of the Earth's land surface (United Nations, Ecosystem Restoration, 2022). There are more than 608 million farms in the world with more than 90% of which are family farms. (Family farms are defined as farms held by an individual, group of individuals or household, with labour mostly supplied by the family). These family farms occupy approximately 70-80% of farmland and produce approximately 80% of the world's food (Lowder et al., 2021). Tremendous efforts have been made in increasing agriculture, food security, and production since the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) and more recently, in 2015, the United Nations set the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with an essential goal being Zero Hunger (SDG₂) (Viana et al., 2022).

Despite this, **approximately 1 in 10 people globally are suffering from dangerous levels of food insecurity** (FAO et al., 2020). Food security is broadly defined as 'when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'; and food insecurity exists 'whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain' (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, Committee on World Food Security, 2012, p. 5).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2006) and the World Health Organization (2011) describe food security as having four elements, as shown in [Figure 1](#).



Figure 1. Understanding Food Security in Australia.
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/understanding-food-insecurity-australia>

1. Food availability

The reliable supply of appropriate quality food from domestic production or importation, including:

- location of food outlets
- availability of food within stores
- price, quality, and variety of available food

2. Food access

The economic and physical capacity to acquire foods that are safe, culturally appropriate, and nutritious, including:

- the capacity to buy and transport food
- mobility to shop for food.

3. Food use

The physical, social, and human resources to transform food into adequate and safe meals, including:

- the knowledge and skills to decide what food to purchase, how to prepare and consume it, and how to allocate it within a household
- home storage, preparation, and cooking facilities
- time available to shop, prepare and cook food
- the use of non-food inputs that are important for wellbeing, such as clean water, hygiene and sanitation, and health care.

4. Food stability and sustainability

The consistent supply of food and the capability to account for risks such as natural disasters, price flux and conflict, including:

- economic stability; household resilience; and insurance measures against natural disasters and crop failures

Read more here: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/understanding-food-insecurity-australia>



In Australia, research suggests that between 4% and 13% of the general population experience food insecurity and 22%-32% of the Indigenous population (Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), 2020). Challenges in food security come from demographic growth, accelerated urbanisation, consumption of non-sustainable and non-renewable resources, climate change, and changes in food consumption patterns such as increase in calories, diet changes towards increasing meat, eggs etc.) (Viana et al., 2022).

Severe ploughing and farming practices, over grazing and the removal of vegetation allows harsh weather elements like rain and wind to erode the soil (United Nations, Ecosystem Restoration, 2022). The United Nations Sustainable Goal number 15 aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of land ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, prevent desertification, and stop and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss (FAO, 2022). Ecosystem services and biodiversity dramatically declines where there is less than 30% cover of healthy native vegetation. In Australia, research shows that approximately one-fifth of Australian ecosystems have less than 30% cover which equates to around 13 million hectares of land requiring restoration to reach the 30% threshold (Mappin et al., 2021).



Landcare

Landcare is a unique movement that began in the 1980s to tackle degradation of farmland, public land, and waterways. Landcare provides support to the 123,000 farmers and fishers across Australia and helps with the adoption of sustainable practices that deliver productivity and environmental outcomes Australia wide. Individuals and groups practice sustainable agriculture and management of natural resources such as:

- soil; water; and native vegetation

Caring for the land includes a range of activities such as:

- sustainable farm practices
- restoring native habitats and revegetation
- controlling weeds and pests
- developing and sharing local natural resource management skills and knowledge.

Read more here:

- <https://www.awe.gov.au>
- <http://www.nrm.gov.au/>
- <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/landcare-get-involved/findagroup/?postcode=>



Revegetation is most suitable for moderately-highly degraded sites which have lost ability for successful natural regeneration of important structural layers, such as trees and shrubs

References

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 - Lowder, S., Sánchez, M., & Bertini, R. (2021). *Which farms feed the world and has farmland become more concentrated?* World Development, 142, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105455>.
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Integration of sustainable development goals ... hope for humanity

By Shivang Ambasht, Masters in Sustainable Development Goals specializing in Environmental sustainability (student). Massey University NZ.



All 17 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are interconnected. This poses a challenge that requires responses to occur in an integrated manner to manage the trade-offs between the 17 goals. There needs to be proper policy-making that includes those living in the slums when it comes to building sustainable cities and communities. A physically and mentally fit young population will boost the chances of a sustainable economy coming into action in the near future.

The main targets of SDG 1 (No Poverty) are centred around the theme of humanity's resilience toward poverty. The ability to adapt and transform the lives of each individual thereby ensuring equal access to economic/basic resources will allow millions of people to be less exposed and vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). SDG 1 also hopes to end extreme poverty. (Franco & Minnery, 2020) Climate change has become a ticking bomb for every country. As countries face climatic events at a higher frequency, an additional 3 per cent of the population will be pushed into poverty. (Leichenko & Silva 2014). For such targets to be achieved, there is a need for strong policy formation at a national and global level. The global north is seen as the major contributor to climate change hence it is no surprise that they are trying to cover their tracks by establishing climate funds worth billions of dollars, even then global leaders fail to take vigorous action against climate change, instead engage in even more oil deals hence pushing back the climate change agenda. (Eisenmenger et al, 2020).

The complexity and integrative nature of the 17 sustainable development goals in that each goal is interconnected, so whenever countries improve their success in one area, other SDGs will mutually benefit. A direct example would be SDG 1 and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), a success rate of 50 per cent in SDG 1 would mean that millions are able to afford sufficient nutritious food at all times in any given place which encompasses the very foundation of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

SDG 1 is crucial to making sure that the present and future have a sustainable livelihood. Poverty as the world is well aware is found in both working and nonworking populations and is more profiled towards women than men. (Dugarova, 2016). Such a goal is established to help countries and their general population become indivisible.

The mentality that the world has infinite resources and that regulations around economic growth should be reduced has led to governments becoming fixated upon economic growth. Human factors like climate change, habitat destruction and eventual urbanisation have acted as significant influences which later became threats as a result of human negligence and greed for resources. Essentially, neo-colonialism was the driver of all decision making, in that economic growth is the answer to all human misery and environmental degradation problems would be solved with technological advances.

Such thinking has now led to all planetary boundaries being exceeded and with little time left for humanity, the global community is slowly making its way into a circular economy which thrives on an environmentally centred mentality. Indigenous people are well known to be closest to the environment, whether it be land, sea or sky. Scholars worldwide support the notion that indigenous people have made the world a better place in terms of

overall sustenance throughout human history and that there was no need for a 'restart button' thousands of years ago. Some of the goals have overlapping targets and indicators and these tend to benefit the overall implementation of the SDGs as it helps designated authorities allocate their time responsibly and allow experts from different domains to work together and share intellectual knowledge that could lead to better accomplishing the goals through policy formulation occurring at a national and regional level. In summary the overall integration of goals allows for better sector networking with the goals being at the centre of attention and the many factors that act as either catalysts for improvement or inhibitors for destruction.

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Scrap Together – a little scrap goes a long way

*Supplied by Susie Summers, Community Relations – Organics, Engagement, Education & Programs
NSW Environment Protection Authority*

This year, \$240,150 in funding was awarded as part of the NSW Environment Protection Authority's (EPA) Scrap Together grants program.

These grants will see residents in 25 local council areas armed with the knowledge to become even better food waste recyclers.

A key theme of the four-part education campaign is to support councils to increase the number of residents using existing Food Organics, Garden Organics (FOGO) services and to ensure participating households maximise the proportion of food waste put in FOGO bins rather than red-lid bins. Clean streams are essential in making processing easier and creating high-quality compost.



"The *Scrap Together* campaign takes food waste recycling to the next level," said Amanda Kane, Organics Unit Manager at the EPA.

"It follows research showing that while people liked the service, some residents were unsure of what they could put in green-lid FOGO bins while others didn't understand what happened to the scraps.

Prior to the grants, the Scrap Together intervention campaign was trialled in three FOGO councils over three months. It resulted in increased food recovery in the green-lid bin,

reduction of food waste generation and reduced contamination

"The trial of the *Scrap Together* campaign in three council areas was a great success. After learning what food scraps can be composted, residents put more food in the FOGO bin rather than the red-lid bin.

"The resulting compost is also great for the environment because it's used to improve soil quality on local farms."

To find out more, including research and reports – and the videos and posters councils have been using in their education campaigns – visit [the EPA website](#).

Queensland News



SpurTopia - spurtopia.com.au

By Tiffany Leigh-Logan, MPH (HOPE researcher QLD)

About

SpurTopia is the sustainable living utopian brainchild of the Spur family. Spurtopia's journey began when the Spur family turned a shared backyard in the Brisbane city centre into a year-round community building, productive, edible garden with chickens, worm farms, honeybees, veggie gardens, and fruit trees. The family consists of an inventor with a Civil Engineering PhD. named Roman, his wife Jana, and their three daughters Lada, Zlata and Meda.

Main Aims

The Spur family immigrated from the Czech Republic to Brisbane in 2009 and brought their daily practice of reducing, reusing, recycling, refusing, and repairing to Australia. Their hope is that by opening up their Fernvale QLD homestead as an educational center, they can achieve their goal to inspire, educate, and empower people everywhere to live more sustainable lives.

Major achievements to date

The Spur family published "Sustainable Living in the Inner City- An Inspirational Case Study and Toolkit for the Urban Farming and Establishing Sustainable Communities in the Cities". The Spurs have also been on ABC Gardening Australia, been interviewed by ABC and SBS radio, been featured in YourVegiPatch, the Sunday Mail, the Courier-Mail, Wellbeing Magazine, wrote an article for City North News, and given an inspirational talk at TEDX Ipswich.



Photo of the Spur family sourced from Spurtopia.com



Herb spiral sourced from Spurtopia.com

Roman has many of his ideas and inventions available on the Spurtopia website for people to reproduce. There is a self-watering herb spiral to grow herbs with very little water in steeping soil. This allows one to grow herbs in different depths of soil facing whichever directions is needed to meet each herb's sun needs. A vegetable pyramid using planter boxes which are single, double, or triple-deckers that create a self-watering environment for vegetables and fruits. A gravity irrigation system that uses recycled materials and a \$100 caged water tank to water one's gardens with rainwater. A Chicken Grain feeder made out of PVC pipe and a plastic bucket. And a Self-watering Bathtub - Wicking garden bed that consists of a bathtub with a raised floor to hold soil above stored water.

Roman also engineered creative ways to utilize invertebrates in the garden. He invented a worm farm 2 in 1 planter pot that allows you to grow veggies out of holes in the sides of a bucket with worms composting materials on top to create a liquid compost that provides most of the water and nutritional needs for the plants. He also invented a Maggot grower tin for chickens to ensure they have enough protein to lay the most nutritious eggs possible.

The Spurs also created an educational program called Spurtopia: Multimedia Kit For Self Sufficiency. It has 2.5 hours of videos, tutorials, schematics and manuals, recipes and extras. It covers topics such as gardening, creating home produce such as fermenting raw foods and making chemical-free cleaning products, off-the-grid-living, urban animals, recycling, and water and energy savings.



2 in 1 planter pot sourced from Spurtopia.com

Current Projects

The Spur family offers farm stays on their homestead so people can experience what it takes to live a sustainable lifestyle. They also offer educational workshops about home-schooling, beekeeping, and gardening and teach people how to preserve their own produce by fermenting foods, baking, making yogurt, and making organic cleaning products.

The Spur family also offers off-site garden consultation and design services where they will come to your home. They also give inspirational talks, and offer school excursions, homestays, hands-on activities, and garden tours.



Garden design example sourced from [Spurtopia.com](https://spurtopia.com)

Resources

You can request a copy of "Sustainable Living in the Inner City- An Inspirational Case Study and Toolkit for the Urban Farming and Establishing Sustainable Communities in the Cities" by sending an e mail to spurtopia@gmail.com. You can purchase Spurtopia: Multimedia Kit For Self Sufficiency as a download for \$65.00 at <https://spurtopia.com.au/product/spurtopia-multimedia-kit-for-self-sufficiency/>. You can read articles by and about Spurtopia at <https://spurtopia.com.au/category/media/> and listen to the TEDx Roman gave at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-COSkrAn5o>. You can also look up directions on how to build any of the inventions mentioned above at <https://spurtopia.com.au/category/ideas-and-inventions/>. For other inquiries there is a contact form at the bottom of all the Spurtopia.com webpages.

National News

Stephanie Alexander's "Kitchen Garden Foundation"

Written by Benjamin Chiu, HOPE volunteer researcher (NSW)



Made possible by several generous individuals, and with the support of the Victorian state government and by philanthropic foundations, the Kitchen Garden Foundation (KGF) is a comprehensive gardening and cooking program at an inner-city Melbourne school, Collingwood College. KGF aims to change the way communities and, in particular children, learn about food. From growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing, KGF provides several platforms including;

Recipes: www.stephaniealexander.com.au/what-to-cook/recipes

Videos: www.stephaniealexander.com.au/videos

Community forums: www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au

Books: www.stephaniealexander.com.au/about-me/writing

An App: www.stephaniealexander.com.au/cook-companion-app

Newsletters from Stephanie herself: www.stephaniealexander.com.au/whats-happening

With national obesity rates on the rise, from 63% of adults in 2014 - 2015 increasing to 67% in 2018 - 2019, it becomes increasingly important to reduce these rates and, consequently, long term health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.¹ KGF aims to address the issue at its roots via efforts to educate children and young people to develop a lifelong appreciation of fresh, seasonal, delicious food, thereby contributing to the prevention of childhood obesity.² KGF maintains 3 targeted outcomes, firstly 'Health & Wellbeing'. KGF aims to give children and young people the confidence, knowledge and skills to grow and cook fresh fruits, access to fresh, seasonal and nourishing food at school and at home. Consequently, communities are strengthened and have increased access to the sensory and therapeutic benefits of green spaces and more time is spent physically outdoors.



Secondly, 'Learning', through learning in the kitchen and garden, KGF aims to enhance the development within areas including STEM, literacy, cultural studies, health, physical education and the arts. Soft skills such as communication, leadership, critical thinking, planning, teamwork, inclusivity, giving back and reciprocity are also enhanced. Lastly, 'Environmental Sustainability', KGF aims to educate and provide understanding of where food comes from and the environmental impacts of food choices. Connected to the natural environment, children and young people feel empowered to make positive and sustainable choices for the environment thus increasing green space, biodiversity, improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions.³



In 2014, Stephanie released a fully updated revision for 'The Cook's Companion', a comprehensive guide on ingredients, cooking techniques and kitchen equipment, along with inspiration, advice and encouragement with close to 1000 failsafe recipes. Originally released in 1996, it has been considered the kitchen 'bible' in over 500,000 homes.⁴ Due to her great work and commitment, Stephanie was awarded the honour of becoming an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2014 for recognition for all that she has accomplished. Since then, the KGF has continued its success. Its initial stated mission, to be represented in 10% of Australian schools with a primary curriculum by the end of 2015, was passed and as of 2016, KGF was present in more than 11% of primary schools and in more than 1000 schools and learning spaces, Australia-wide. Going from strength to strength, in 2020 the program expanded its reach with the launch of two pilot programs with tailored programs for both Early Childhood and for Secondary Years, making food education for all levels of school curriculum.⁵

As of August 2022, Stephanie is working on new recipes and a book of family friendly recipes inspired by what students have been preparing across the KGF programs throughout the country. Recipes are adapted for family sized portions rather than tastes for twenty and are sure to help families across the country.⁶

The Kitchen Garden Foundation, led by Stephanie Alexander relies on the generosity, shared vision and commitment of schools and early childhood services, volunteers, philanthropic organisations, government, business and individuals. It is a fantastic, innovative and, most importantly of all, effective cause for paving the way for future generations to change the way we think about food, reducing our carbon footprint and reducing obesity.

KGF can be supported in a multitude of ways, besides donations, fundraising, business partnerships and a shop selling all sorts of goodies to help you get started on your culinary journey. Link to all these options can be found through the below website and, together, we can create a brighter, healthier future for generations to come.

<https://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/content/support-us-0>

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3. https://www.kitchengardenfoundation.org.au/sites/default/files/Files/KGP_Theory_of_change.pdf
4. <https://www.stephaniealexander.com.au/books/the-cook%E2%80%99s-companion/>
5. <https://www.stephaniealexander.com.au/about-me/kitchen-garden-foundation/>
6. <https://www.stephaniealexander.com.au/whats-happening/>



Renew – www.renew.org.au

Main Aims

Established in 1980, Renew ('Alternative Technology Association Inc trading as Renew Australia) is a national, non-for-profit organisation that provides consultancy services in the energy, water and communications space. By providing expert, independent advice on sustainable solutions for the home such as solar power, energy efficiency, rainwater tanks, materials reuse and waste, Renew aims to inspire people to live sustainably in their homes and communities. In particular, Renew aims to promote renewable energy,

emissions reduction, healthier, more affordable and climate-resilient homes, and protect consumer rights in energy markets.

Each year, Renew engages with more than 250,000 people around Australia and beyond through various channels including their magazines *Renew* and *Sanctuary*; events such as Speed Date a Sustainability Expert, EC Expo and Sustainable House Day; online information and calculators; advice service; and research and advocacy partners.

Major Achievements:

Climate Resilient Homes

With the announcement in August from the National Building Ministers meeting that all new Australian homes will need to meet 7-star energy standards by 2023, Renew is celebrating a milestone in its advocacy for more sustainable homes. Renew leads a national coalition of community, consumer and environment groups calling for action to raise the energy and water performance of all Australian homes. The public call for energy efficient homes, which has seen a joint statement released two weeks ahead of the National Building Ministers meeting, has been led by the Property Council of Australia, Renew, the Australian Council of Social Service, the Green Building Council of Australia, the Energy Efficiency Council, Energy Consumers Australia, the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, and the Climate Council.

Renew's research into energy-efficient homes has found that building 7-star homes with solar and no gas cut bills by over \$1000 a year. This decision is estimated to result in a cut of emissions by up to 78 million tonnes by 2050 and will lower the cost of grid upgrades by up to \$12.6 billion by 2050. This means that it will take 25% less energy to heat and cool a new home.

Current Campaigns/Projects

Aside from the Climate Resilient Homes campaign, Renew leads other advocacy campaigns including consumer-focused energy markets and energy systems transition.

Consumer-focused energy markets

For the past 15 years, Renew has been campaigning in the energy market policy and regulatory space, and has become a formally recognised Consumer Advocacy organisation in the National Electricity Market and a participant member of the National Consumer Roundtable on Energy. Alongside other advocates, Renew's major contributions include:

- Ensuring the national appliance efficiency rating scheme and renewable energy target were retained and improved;
- Development of a model for multiple energy trading relationships for households;

- Improvements to energy price comparison sites Energy Made Easy and Victoria Energy Compare; and
- Government commitments to consumer-focused and privacy-responsive energy data access frameworks;

Energy systems transition

Renew's advocacy projects include campaigning for a transition to renewable energy such as wind turbines and solar panels, supported by energy storage and new transmission. Due to the challenges of this transition, Renew advocates for integrated, long-term planning of the energy transition.

An example of a Renew project in the energy transition space was the launch of Totally Renewable Yackandandah (TRY) in 2014 with the small, Victorian town of Yackandandah's aiming to become 100% renewable by 2022. Since that time, TRY has implemented most of their 5-stage plan which is to introduce solar power at the home, community-wide solar installation and monitoring, community-wide battery deployment, community mini grid vision, and other renewable sources delivered via the network. TRY has successfully undertaken hot water and solar bulk buys, the establishment of three local microgrids, a 200-property Virtual Power Plant, funding and installation of the Yack01 battery with Indigo Power, and a study on community-scale microgrid options. Currently TRY is at 60% renewables!



Source: Renew Facebook
Witchcliffe, Western
Australia, Australia.

Find out more

If you would like to get involved, TRY has [branches throughout all of Australia](#) including Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Canberra, Geelong electric vehicle branch, Melbourne, Hunter Region, Perth, Sydney West, Sydney Central, Tassie North branch (in recess), Tassie South branch, Toowoomba Branch, and the Illawarra branch.

The Office of the National Soils Advocate

Australia's National Soils Advocate

The National Soils Advocate is an independent champion for soil health and sustainability. The Advocate raises awareness of the value of soils, of the economic and environmental benefits soils deliver and the importance of conserving and improving the health of Australia's soils—a world-first in terms of elevating soil health to a level of national significance.

The position contributes to the national objective of protecting, restoring and maintaining the health of the Australian agricultural landscape, to enhance productivity, and guarantee a food-secure nation with sustainable farming communities. Soil health improvements will also support the national objective to grow Australian agriculture into a \$100 billion industry by 2030, for the social and economic benefit of all Australians.

The position also has an international dimension. Many areas of the world are facing substantial soil, water, food and nutrition problems. The growing global population is increasing the demand for food and fibre, placing ever more pressure on the environment and increasing the need for sustainability. Soil has a critical role to play in addressing global challenges, including food security and adapting to a changing climate. Australia's experience in land and water management, and the effort it is committing to soils, is of considerable interest to other countries.

The National Soils Advocate works to create an enabling environment to facilitate change, working to improve the sustainable management of our soils and agricultural landscape.

The National Soils Advocate is

- elevating the importance of, and gaining support for, improving soil health across sectors
- raising stakeholder awareness and know-how about the importance of conserving and improving soil health and landscape conditions to support sustainable agricultural production and profitability

- highlighting how improved soil health will benefit the environment and help to meet global challenges, such as food security and climate change
- providing leadership, building connections and gaining the support of industry, governments, researchers, to effect practice change to improve soil health
- engaging with current and emerging soils research
- supporting productive networks to facilitate sharing of knowledge and resources
- assisting to deliver the National Soils Strategy.

The National Soils Advocate undertakes a global advocacy function by:

- advocating for soil health on a global level, to help address global challenges, including food security and climate change;
- raising awareness of Australia's experience in addressing soil challenges;
- promoting Australia's expertise and capabilities in soil science and research and in land, water and soil management.

The National Soils Advocate is supported by the Office of the National Soils Advocate, in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

For further information, visit www.agriculture.gov.au/national-soils-advocate

The Honourable Penelope Wensley AC



The Honourable Penelope Wensley AC was appointed as Australia's National Soils Advocate on 28 August 2020, succeeding Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery, AC, AO (Mil), CVO, MC (Retd). General Jeffery was influential and respected in the role since his initial appointment in 2012, only stepping aside due to ill health.

Former Governor of Queensland and distinguished Australian diplomat, the Honourable Penelope Wensley AC, has a long-held interest and substantial experience in natural resource management, environmental and sustainable development matters, and in Australia's response to national and global challenges in these areas.

Ms Wensley was a key contributor to the negotiation of several landmark international treaties to address environmental challenges through the United Nations in her roles as Australian Ambassador for the Environment from 1992 to 1996, as Ambassador to the UN, Geneva 1993-96 and Ambassador to the UN, New York, 1997-2001.

As State Governor, Ms Wensley was active in promoting environmental knowledge and awareness and was a strong supporter of community groups and organisations involved with environmental management, conservation and protection, including as State Patron of Queensland Water and Land Carers.

Ms Wensley is: Patron of Soil Science Australia; Patron of the Soil CRC; Chairman of the Australian Institute of Marine Science Council; Chairman of the Reef Advisory Committee and an Honorary Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

Ms Wensley has held many leadership roles, nationally and internationally. In addition to her knowledge of the environment and environmental policy, she brings to the position of National Soils Advocate, substantial expertise in public policy development, strategy development and implementation, communication and negotiation, and community and stakeholder engagement.

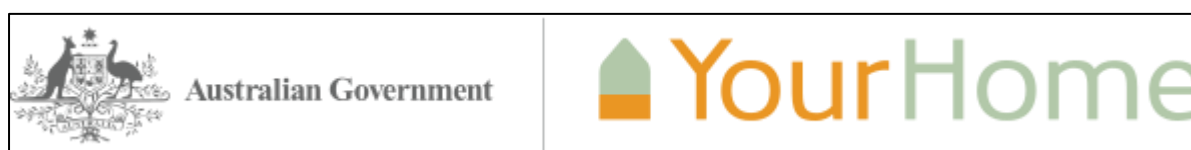
(Caption: The National Soils Advocate, the Honourable Penelope Wensley AC inspecting a field of mixed pasture providing a good level of groundcover for healthy soils.)

Resources

Sustainable homes and buildings

By Georgia Eastment MSc., HOPE Researcher (Vic)

Your Home - www.yourhome.gov.au



Your Home is a guide to sustainable housing that provides advice to Australians about designing, building, buying, or renovating. Your Home has been developed by experts using evidence-based solutions, which have been verified by the Australian Government. The aim of the guide is to make sustainable housing more accessible through providing education tools.

Initially published in 2001, this guide is regularly updated with the most recent scientific evidence to reflect changing climatic and economic conditions. The first edition was created for industry professionals, particularly builders and designers. As the guide has become more established, it now aims to assist *all* Australians: homeowners and residents; builders; designers; architects; policy makers; students.

To those looking to buy or build, Your Home provides a list of resources as a starting point for research and expert advice. It also provides a list of tips to make the process less stressful. For builders and designers, it provides information about how to choose the most appropriate materials to increase the viability of the home. For residents, there is also advice about how to maximise energy and water-efficiency, including renewable energy, active transport, hot water systems etc.

Three free designs are also provided. Their designs are able to be replicated or adapted to suit the specific needs of each resident or location. They have been designed by expert architects to be energy-efficient, affordable, and comfortable. These designs have been given a NatHERS rating, with a minimum of 7 stars out of 10. This indicated they perform well at thermal performance. These designs can be found at <https://www.yourhome.gov.au/house-designs>.

The website also includes a list of case studies of successful sustainable housing. These case studies demonstrate how sustainable design and construction can be applied across all diverse climate zones. Interested persons can navigate the easy-to-use web page to find a case study relevant to the climate zone they live in, or are planning to live in. The case studies can be found at <https://www.yourhome.gov.au/case-studies>.

What is sustainable housing?

Sustainable housing refers to the design, construction, and operation of a house that maximises the synergies between environmental, economic, and social conditions. Sustainable housing pursues environmental sustainability through climate-appropriate designs. This includes energy-efficient products, long-lasting materials and minimal contamination and waste. For example, passive design techniques such as shading are recommended to reduce increasing temperatures. Readers are provided with the best shading option for their home, depending on its orientation and the climate zone that a house is located. Such features intend to increase a home's resilience against the changing climate, enabling it to withstand climate-related perturbations. Economic sustainability includes using these features to reduce the cost of products and the need for future maintenance and upgrades. The social aspect ensures that a sustainable home is secure, safe, and accessible, and aligns with the desired aesthetics of the homeowner or tenant.

Access to Your Home resources:

- The contents of this guide can be found for free on the Your Home website: <https://www.yourhome.gov.au/>.
 - The guide can also be purchased as a paperback or hardcover, for \$44 or \$66 respectively.
 - A sample PDF can also be accessed here:
https://yourhome.infoservices.com.au/assets/YH_BookSample_low.pdf.
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The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) were established by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. The ABCB is the central body responsible for forming the National Construction Code, WaterMark and CodeMark. The aim of the ABCB is to provide a national set of standards for the building and construction industry to ensure efficiency and sustainability.

National Construction Code (NCC)

The NCC outlines a list of regulatory requirements that must be complied with in the design and construction of new buildings. This ensures that buildings do not compromise health, safety, accessibility, amenity, and sustainability. The NCC is formalised through state and territory legislation. Volume I and Volume II are referred to as the Building Code of Australia. Volume I outlines the technical requirements for design and construction and Volume II covers small building regulations. NCC Volume III is specific to the Public Code of Australia. The current NCC was implemented in 2019 and is reviewed and updated every three years through public consultation and rigorous evaluation. NCC 2022 will be available soon. More information on proposed changes can be found here: <https://www.abcb.gov.au/propose-change>.

WaterMark

WaterMark is a certification scheme for plumbing and drainage products. The certification verifies that the product is compliant with the Plumbing Code of Australia, is safe for use, and fit for purpose. While a plumbing and drainage product can only be installed by a licensed plumber if it is WaterMark certified, it is not illegal to sell non-WaterMark products. Products that require the WaterMark certification are outlined in *the Plumbing Code of Australia* and Australian Standard 3500, and includes lavatory and urinal equipment, and showers. To receive the certification on a product, organisations must apply at <https://www.jas-anz.org/>.



CodeMark

CodeMark is another certification scheme administered by the ABCB. CodeMark enables new and innovative building products to be assessed and certified in specified circumstances to comply with the Building Code of Australia. When a manufacturer makes claims about a building product, the product is assessed to ensure production quality controls are implemented and it meets safety standards. If the product is seemed to comply with the Building Code, it will receive a CodeMark certification.

Current initiatives

The ABCB are currently undertaking various initiatives to improve NCC 2022. Some of these are outlined below:

- Energy efficiency: ABCB are scoping and looking to implement changes to the provisions for residential buildings to ease the transition to low energy buildings. This includes increasing the affordability of on-site renewables and increasing thermal comfort.
- Fire safety: To improve the fire safety of buildings, the ABCB are consulting with Fire and Rescue NSW to improve the 2012 ABCB Smoke Alarms RIS. They are also working to improve building codes for multi-storey early childhood centres and providing advice to industry about how to comply with this.
- Liveable housing: The ABCB have undertaking consultation with key stakeholder groups to upstate the accessibility provisions for residential buildings. The aim is to ensure the housing accessibility does not discriminate against people with disabilities. These changes will be implemented in Volumes I and Volume II.

Other current initiatives can be found here: <https://www.abcb.gov.au/initiatives>.

The Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) - www.abcc.gov.au

The Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) is an Australian Government agency. This agency was initially established as the Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner in 2005 and was then demobilised in 2012. Following the 2016 federal election, the ABCC was reinstated by the *Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Act 2016* (Cth) (BCIIP Act).



The aim of this body is to ensure that the building and construction industry is fair, efficient, and productive. It does this through the Building Code of Australia and Australian Standards. This requires the agency to regulate the building and construction industry to ensure compliance with design, construction, performance, alongside workplace rights and relations requirements. To fulfill this role, the strategic actions of this agency include education; advice; monitoring and assessment of compliance; litigation and enforcement. However, under the BCIIP Act, the ABCC's jurisdiction relates to Commonwealth funded building work and excludes mining and domestic building.

Since 2018, the ABCC has been headed by Commissioner Stephen McBurney. The Commissioner's powers include referring matters to relevant agencies, investigating suspected non-compliance, and assisting industry participants with understanding and fulfilling the Building Code.

The ABCC are also required to apply principles of ecologically sustainable development. As such, the ABCC are committed to providing advice to industry to ensure building and construction practices are sustainable and energy efficient.

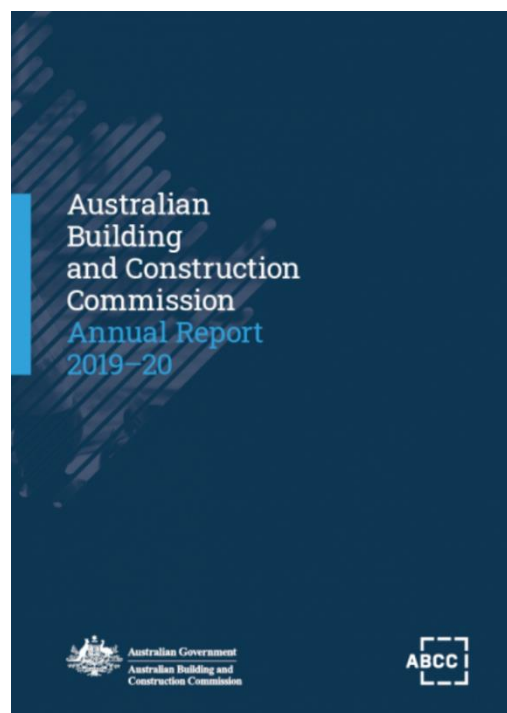
What is the Building Code?

The Code sets provides guidelines and expectations for the building industry. It outlines requirements that must be followed by government entities and recipients of Commonwealth funding, as well as contractors and subcontractors. This includes content of enterprise agreements, obligations to report actual or threatened industrial action, compliance with laws, right of entry, freedom of association prohibited conduct, fitness for work and dispute settlement.

In the period of 2020-2021, the ABCC took a number of measures to address non-compliance with the code. This included recovering over \$900,000 of wages from 1,448 employees who had experienced unlawful conduct. Over \$3,000,000 worth of penalties were also imposed on offenders who acted unlawfully.

Recent changes to the Building Code

From July 26, 2022, the *Code for the Tendering and Performance of Building Work Amendment Instrument 2022 (Amended Code)* took effect. Many requirements were removed from the code, including Workplace Relations Management Plans. Code entities are no longer required to report threatened or actual industrial action or code breaches or comply with the security of payment provisions. The ABCC will also cease to issue Determinations of Compliance to contractors. However, remaining obligations include becoming covered by the Code, Labour Market Testing, and funding entity requirements.



For more information: www.abcc.gov.au

Australian Building and Construction Commission to be abolished

The *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022* is now in force and will abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).

The Act provides for abolition of the ABCC to occur on 6 February 2023.

You can learn more about it by reading our [E-Alert: Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act now in force](#).

For advice and assistance with your workplace rights and responsibilities, please contact the Fair Work Ombudsman at [13 13 94](tel:131394) or at www.fairwork.gov.au.

Housing Industry Association (HIA) - <https://hia.com.au>



The HIA is a representative body of the home building industry. Initially named the Builders and Allied Traders Association, the HIA were formed in 1946 with less than 1,000 members. Since then, the membership has grown to over 60,000 members who work in the industry. This includes residential builders, business associates, contractors, professional services, manufacturers, developers, and students.

The HIA have developed a National Code of Ethics, which provides a standard for member entities to comply with. The aim of the National Code of Ethics is to ensure the Australian housing industry provides services that are fair, competent, honest, and founded in integrity.

The current priorities of the HIA include: housing matters; maintaining housing affordability; delivering quality and compliant products; addressing business compliance; redressing safety rules; building careers for the future; building a credible and trusted industry; being the voice of the residential building industry. The HIA are pursuing these priorities through their various roles, opportunities, and initiatives.

Roles and initiatives

One of the major roles of the HIA is to develop and advocate for policy change on behalf of its members. Develop and advocate for policy change – representing views of members. For example, the HIA recently pushed the expansion of the first home buyers guarantee scheme. This led to 10,000 places in the New Home Guarantee, as well as the creation of the Family Home Guarantee.

In 2021, the HIA also hosted the Australian GreenSmart Awards to recognise sustainable home designs.



The HIA also offer opportunities to upskills, including an online Certificate IIV, a Job Ready training and work experience program. A Group Training Scheme has also been established to support apprentices in their career development.

The HIA Tradepass system was developed to streamline the process of hiring a builder. The Tradepass status demonstrates to builders that a contractor has the relevant registrations and certifications. Thus far, over 11,000 documents have been verified through this system.

More information about these initiatives can be found at: <https://hia.com.au>.

Access to HIA resources:

The HIA website offers a range of free resources, including advice on building sustainable homes, understanding building codes, navigating COVID19 regulations, handling disputes, and building materials and products. These resources can be found at <https://hia.com.au/resources-and-advice>.

Members of the HIA have access to more advice and resources. This includes the HIA monthly newsletter, and the quarterly *Building News* magazine. At \$805 per year, memberships can be attained at <https://hia.com.au/signup/registration>.
