

## **Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE): The Story So Far** *By Regina Kimble, HOPE researcher Qld (14 December 2020)*

### **Roots of HOPE**

HOPE (Householders' Options to Protect the Environment) was born at a World Environment Day informal talk in Mansfield Victoria, when the speaker, Janet Mackenzie, gave a speech called "Hope". Janet's speech was based on the idea that everyday people can make a difference in the global environmental circumstances by using their talents, resources and networks to raise awareness.

From this idea, HOPE's central message formed: Think globally, act locally.

This message reached and inspired many people and soon around 80 branches of HOPE were established throughout Victoria. This huge response solidified HOPE's establishment and soon after *The HOPE Generator: Bicarb and Beyond* publication was produced to provide a charter and various environmental awareness resources for HOPE's branches to use.

Mackenzie extended HOPE's "Think globally, act locally" message in the charter, stating "... everyone can do something, no matter how small. Maybe tomorrow they'll do more."

Mackenzie's message resonated with Frank Ondrus and his wife. When the Ondrus' moved to Toowoomba, Queensland, they brought this message with them and established a HOPE branch in 1993.

### **Start of HOPE Toowoomba**

Frank grew up in Melbourne, with a childhood rooted in conserving resources through his family growing food, keeping chooks and repairing items instead of throwing them away. In 1991, Frank started volunteering in Victoria, where his interest for environmental awareness blossomed.

Frank learned about HOPE through a friend, and strongly related with HOPE's charter and mission. When Frank and his wife moved to Toowoomba in early 1993, he wanted to start a local HOPE branch. After gathering support and volunteers, the branch was established in September of that year.



### **History and Accomplishments**

Over the past 27 years, Frank and his volunteers at HOPE Toowoomba – now HOPE Australia - have achieved big environmental wins for the Toowoomba region. One of the first things they did was start a weekly column in the Downs Star newspaper to circulate helpful hints for homeowners to reduce their environmental impact. This column turned into a bi-monthly newsletter that reached homeowners across South East Queensland.

This newsletter helped HOPE grow its partnerships and support to further promote HOPE's mission and the mission of other environment NGOs. Currently, HOPE releases its own monthly newsletter that is shared with members and organisations throughout the world.

Over the years, HOPE has facilitated numerous community events and programs with other organisations. Notably, in 2009 HOPE received funding from the Queensland state government to promote energy efficiency practices at home and to start the Darling Downs Solar Neighbourhood project. In 2014, HOPE partnered the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee and others to set up Toowoomba's initial Youth Leading the World Congress. Overall, HOPE provided information displays to over 20 community events each year.

## Current Projects

HOPE is currently working on a number of projects and resources to help local communities spread awareness about environmentally-friendly practices. Recently, HOPE has started releasing podcasts run by a senior member, Andrew Nicholson called *After the Virus - talking about an innovative recovery from COVID-19 in S.E. Queensland*. This podcast discusses how South East Queensland can have a green economic recovery following the current pandemic.

HOPE is also working on releasing two special reports: Food Security; and Water Security. These reports are focused on highlighting food and water insecurity issues in Australia, while discussing some local solutions Queenslanders can implement to increase resource security and sustainability.

Locally in Toowoomba, HOPE is working on developing two brochures about the *Waste Hierarchy*; and the *Directory of Heritage Facilities and Landmarks in the Toowoomba Regional Council jurisdiction*. HOPE is also resuming community forums, workshops and field trips in Toowoomba for the 2021 period. HOPE is preparing for a Youth Summit (April 2021), for secondary students to participate in learning about global environmental and social justice issues.

Despite the pandemic, HOPE's future has good prospects with upcoming projects, especially in Toowoomba. If you are interested in helping HOPE, you can donate via [hopeaustralia.org.au/donations](http://hopeaustralia.org.au/donations), all donations above \$2 AUD are tax deductible. Follow HOPE on social media accounts to stay up to date with projects and learn more about the latest environmental news in Australia.

