

Call of the Wild: Decoding Australia's Long-Term Future

By Michael Lee, Founder of the Institute of Futurology

"In the end...the environmental budget is the only one that really counts...it's difficult to find two nations that have been more severely disadvantaged by climate change than the US and Australia."

Tim Flannery, Australian scientist, conservationist and author of *The Weather-Makers* and *The Future Eaters*

"Ecologically, the Australian environment is exceptionally fragile, the most fragile of any First World country except perhaps Iceland...overgrazing, salinization, soil erosion, introduced species, water shortages, and man-made droughts...have become severe in Australia."

Jared Diamond, Author of *Collapse* and *Guns, Germs and Steel*

A generation of far-reaching social change lies ahead for Australia. There will be a serious struggle to adapt to climate change as water security becomes a critical issue for many coastal cities and for agriculture. Environmental pressure on the world's driest inhabited continent is building due to declining and more variable rainfall as well as widespread soil degradation.

In addition, it seems inevitable over time that the country must change its predominantly British cultural identity towards a more authentic Asia Pacific culture in order to become more socially inclusive and geographically centred.¹

Finally, the first part of this century will see the rise of China to superpower status and ultimate domination of East Asia with a corresponding waning of US influence in the region. This geo-political power-shift will represent a strategic challenge to Australia in its current capacity as a military ally of America.

Ultimately, these three kinds of change - environmental, socio-cultural and strategic - are interrelated. Each will involve an outworking of geographical factors on social systems, values and policies. In fact, these sequence of changes could be of such a fundamental character that multiple influences from Australia's history will come up against competing geographical influences. Tension between geography and history in Australia will drive a generation of change. What is at stake is the long-term evolution of its society. The push of geography should, in my view, trump the pull of history.

¹ A word like "geo-centric" could be coined to describe the process of adapting as completely as is humanly possible to geographical challenges and the demands of a country's immediate global location, even at the expense of previous historic, or strategic, alliances conducted over significant distances.

In an era of escalating energy costs, brought about by a global energy crisis which will result in a completely new energy order beyond fossil fuels, the tyranny of distance is intensified, giving Australian geography yet another edge over its history in its future causal impacts.

Australia today is still a largely Europeanised society, with trans-Atlantic strategic alliances, located deep in the Asia Pacific region far from its historic roots in Britain. Factors like climate change, the energy crisis, the rise of China in an evolving new Age of Asia and the growing clamour for social inclusion all challenge this current picture of reality. The time may be rapidly approaching for Australia to heed its “call of the wild”.

A society is a group of people living off the land they regard as their own in systems they believe are to their historic advantage. Australia began its current life in 1788 as a remote penal colony in what is now Sydney situated over 10,000 miles from its governors back in London. The humble penal colony for banished convicts was given the British name and identity, New South Wales. Australia was set up by Great Britain to strategically compensate for its loss of land in the New World after the victory of the American colonies in their Revolutionary War of 1775-1783.

Since its inauspicious beginnings, the country has undergone, through dogged determination, inventiveness and ingenuity, an economic miracle to become a high income country.² Australia today has 0.3% of the global population but 1.1% of its Gross National Income. It has a high average life expectancy and standard of living. This progress constitutes a marvellous pioneering achievement for a comparatively small nation placed in a distant location. It is a story of overcoming the odds...or, more accurately, *some* of the odds.

For the country's greatest challenges lie ahead, not behind, of it. Destiny calls when there is a clash between a country's past and its future. And the kind of large-scale social change already mentioned contains the potential for conflict and even turbulence. It could feel at times like the land is undergoing a revolution in slow-motion, a deep-rooted mental and cultural re-orientation. As an example of this geographic realignment process, the CIA World Factbook speaks of a “symbiotic, but sometimes tense, economic relationship with China” and indicates that Australia is holding Trans-Pacific Partnership talks and trade negotiations with China, Japan, and Korea³ as it seeks to strengthen relationships within Asia.

² The CIA World Factbook currently ranks Australia 22nd in the world on GDP - per capita (PPP), just below Sweden (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html?countryName=Australia&countryCode=as®ionCode=aus&rank=22#as>), while in 2006, the World Bank ranked Australia as the 16th largest economy in the world.

³ The CIA World Factbook – Australia: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/as.html>

Clark (2008) defines a socio-cultural revolution, such as the one which happened to modern society in the 1960s, in these thoughtful words: "Perceptions changed, expectations were raised and demands made that reoriented society."⁴ This statement describes the kind of deep shift confronting Australia. But this realignment will take place against a background of entrenched values that could resist such change. World-renowned scientist and interdisciplinary thinker, Jared Diamond writes: "...many Australian cultural attitudes, as well as government policies, remain the ones that caused damage in the past and are still continuing to cause it."⁵ Leading Australian environmental scientist Tim Flannery concurs: "Today Australians are more likely to proclaim a love of things native, yet because they often lack a true understanding of their environment, theirs is a love that can kill. Such well-meaning but uncomprehending enthusiasm is one reason why many Aboriginal communities continue to struggle under insupportable burdens, why native species keep vanishing, and why our future is being cut short by an insatiable addiction to fossil fuels...We have now embarked on a new phase of our national existence, and just where it will lead I do not know. But I have a sinking feeling that unless every Australian searches profoundly for ways to help our land survive, things are likely to end badly for both ourselves and this great island continent."⁶

In this context of shifting geo-political relations and priorities, questions arise such as, how long will Australia remain a Commonwealth state with the British Queen as its official head of state and legal owner of all its territories more than 10,000 miles from Buckingham Palace? Will Australia ever place China or Korea on equal footing with its traditional allies, America and Britain? How long will America maintain a military presence in Australia? Will Australia stay a Western "trans-Atlantic" culture despite being located deep in Asia Pacific? To what extent will the country and its people tolerate and embrace Asian cultural influences and socially include Asian residents and citizens? When will the Australian state fully incorporate its Aboriginal people within its highest political and economic power structures to overcome a lingering historic legacy of racism⁷? For example, would Australians accept an Aborigine – or an Asian for that matter - as their Prime Minister just as America elected Barack Obama to the nation's highest office?

⁴ Clark, J. 2008. *Aborigines and Activism – Race, Aborigines & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia*, Chapter 1.

⁵ Diamond, J. 2005. *Collapse – how societies choose to fail or survive*, p. 409.

⁶ Flannery, T. 2004. *Country: A continent, a scientist and a kangaroo*, Chapter 26 "Re-making Country".

⁷ "Like African-American action, Aboriginal resistance to white control has a long history." Clark (2008), Chapter 1.

And what structural changes will be needed for its coastal cities to survive climate change? Will there be internal migrations, with depopulation trends in some cities, caused by growing water scarcity? What is the ecological carrying capacity of the Australian continent? Or has the country, with what Tim Flannery calls its “very unusual”, “ancient” and “limiting” ecology,⁸ already reached, or even exceeded, its maximum sustainable population?⁹

These are some of the searching questions the whole of Australia is likely to be asking in this generation (that is, between now and around 2035). Answers to them could determine the nation’s long-term sustainability and shape its cultural evolution for the rest of the century and beyond.

Frankly, it would be unrealistic to expect change on this scale to occur without some social unrest. The USA had its civil rights disturbances in the 1960s. Britain and France still face today the twin threats of race-based riots and home-grown terror attacks from Islamic extremists. South Africa saw widespread social instability from the 1960s as the country switched from Apartheid to a full African democracy by 1994.

Since Australia’s national re-alignment, or transition into an Asian-Pacific society, would involve different kinds of power struggles at various levels of its society, economic, political and cultural, I would anticipate a future rise in incidents of conflict. There could even be a decade or two of social tension occurring sometime in the period between now and 2040. Indicators of social disturbance could include increased crime, racist attacks (both physical and verbal), sharpening xenophobia, a high-degree of churn in party politics, with a growing polarisation between left and right wing factions and some political extremism, a more intense and pessimistic national mood, strikes, a few terrorist incidents and occasional riots in city streets.

Let us look closer at the challenging factors which will drive what I believe will be a generation of social change. After that, the essay will conclude with four scenarios for Australia’s 21st century prospects: the “Queen’s Land” Future, the Overshoot Future, the Kangaroo Leap Future and the Uluru- Ayers Rock Future.

Australia’s ecological challenges include those caused by climate change, destruction of soil, decline of fertility and pollution.¹⁰ It seems the country is heading inexorably for a considerably less stable climate and environment. After all, fertile soil and water supplies are two fundamentals of any viable country.

⁸ “A Chat with Tim Flannery on Population Control”, by Karina Kelly, 1995, Quantum. www.abc.net.au/quantum/info/q95-19-5.htm

⁹ The Population Reference Bureau defines a country’s carrying capacity as the maximum sustainable size of a resident population in a given ecosystem. *Population Handbook*, p.56. In “A Chat with Tim Flannery on Population Control”, Flannery estimated the optimal population for the continent was between 6-12 million, which begs the question – what is going to happen with the other 8-14 million already living there? Jared Diamond writes: “Given Australia’s limited supplies of water and limited potential for food production, it lacks the capacity to support a significantly larger population.” Diamond(2005), p. 397.

¹⁰ “Australians emit more CO² per capita than any nation on earth” Flannery, T. 2005. *The Weather-makers*, p.109. The dilemma in terms of carbon footprint is that power is provided to 20 million Australians via 24 coal power stations and coal is the “dirtiest” fossil fuel.

The most serious problem facing the country is that global warming is intensifying El Niño-La Niña cycles.¹¹ It has even been postulated by some environmental scientists that El Niño-like conditions may one day become semi-permanent. This would bring a continuation of devastating droughts, reinforced by hotter temperatures, along with highly inconsistent rainfall, to Australia. Flannery explains that these conditions have brought about a dramatic decline in the rainfall on Australia's east coast.¹² And South Western Australia, which produced the country's great western wheat-belt, has seen a 15% decrease in average rainfall. The wheat lands are now receding west, towards the Indian Ocean, since 2004.¹³

Changes to rainfall on this scale can threaten water supplies to farms and cities. At times, some of Australia's major cities are on a knife's edge in terms of demand for, and supply of, water.

Between 1975-1996, for example, Perth's surface water fell by 50% and between 1997-2004 the amount of water flowing into the city's dams fell further to about one third of what it received only three decades earlier.¹⁴ Sydney, which simply does not have the groundwater resources of Perth, has an increasingly fragile supply of water. A dry spell beginning in 1998 saw seven consecutive years of below average rainfall. Between 1996 to 2003 the flow of water to the city's extensive network of dams declined by 45%.

Degraded or damaged soil - "70% of our soils are degraded"¹⁵ - on a largely arid landmass has meant a decreased annual contribution of agriculture to the economy in recent times. The UN expects Australia's rural population to decline relative to total population from 12.8% in 2000 to a low level of 8.1% by 2030.

Killer underground salt is advancing across swathes of what was once farmland. For example, there is an estimated average of between 70-120 kilograms of salt per square metre in Australia's western wheat-growing land, accumulated over millions of years where wind and rain have deposited it from the Indian Ocean: "Today, impoverished and bankrupt farmers are facing the worst-case of dry-land salinity in the world".¹⁶ The salt has resulted in losses on a scale of billions of dollars with little hope of a turnaround in those areas the salt has colonised.

¹¹ "A two-to-eight year-long cycle that brings extreme climatic events to much of the world" – Flannery (2005), p. 85.

¹² Flannery (2005), p. 121.

¹³ Flannery (2005), p. 127-8. His map of Australia's rainfall changes over the past 54 years shows significant losses on the east and west coasts of the country where the majority of its cities are situated (see illustrations between p.172-3).

¹⁴ Flannery (2005), p. 129.

¹⁵ "A Chat with Tim Flannery on Population Control", by Karina Kelly, 1995, Quantum.

¹⁶ Flannery (2005), p. 129. Jared Diamond writes: "Some Australian soils contain more than 200 pounds of salt per square yard of surface area." Diamond, J (2005), p. 383.

The country's overall soil productivity is low: "All those economic problems of Australian agriculture, forestry, fisheries and failed land development are consequences of the low productivity of Australian soils. The other big problem of Australia's soils is that in many areas they are not only low in nutrients but also high in salt..."¹⁷

Threatened soil and variable water supply together make up a future-defining ecological challenge for Australia in a time of climate change.

Jared Diamond states that over-grazing by Australian sheep farmers has caused ruinous land degradation and that its sheep industry is now a loss-making business.¹⁸

Nor is this all the bad ecological news. There have been huge losses to the country's wet tropics rainforests.¹⁹ There has been an upsurge in increased cyclones, low pressure systems and floods.²⁰ The risk of costly annual summer bush fires has risen. And given that tourism is Australia's second biggest industry after mining, the extensive, on-going damage to the Great Barrier Reef is an environmental disaster.²¹

Australian fisheries are also depleted after years of over-exploitation: "Hence Australia's rivers and coastal waters are also relatively unproductive, with the result that Australia's fisheries have been quickly mined and overexploited like its farmlands and its forests...the value of its freshwater fisheries is now negligible."²²

All these environmental challenges add up to a significant national threat: "Australia...may find itself on the brink of collapse as a result of declining rainfall across its main population and agricultural centres."²³

Will climate change one day claim a whole city, when there is not enough rainfall to sustain its population, leaving behind an apocalyptic-looking ghost city? That sounds incredible to 21st century ears but it is by no means beyond the realms of possibility in the following decades.

Socially, Australia faces an ageing population as well as an entrenched racism problem. Let us discuss each of these issues to understand how these two factors can drive future social changes in Australia.

¹⁷ Diamond, J. (2005), p. 383.

¹⁸ Diamond, J. (2005), p. 390.

¹⁹ Flannery (2005), p.177.

²⁰ Flannery (2005), p. 140.

²¹ Flannery describes this as reef as the world's most vulnerable to climate change - Flannery (2005), p. 108. El Niño conditions have bleached over 60% of the Reef complex.

²² Diamond, J. (2005), p. 382.

²³ Flannery (2005), p. 292.

The UN forecasts that Australia's population size will have risen from 19 139 000 in 2000 to just over 28 million by 2050,²⁴ despite its population growth rate falling steadily from 1.19% in 2000-2005 to a very low 0.44% by 2045-2050 due to a declining birth rate.²⁵ Australia's population growth rate is forecast to decrease from 1.19% to a very low 0.44% by 2050 and its total fertility rate²⁶ will also stay below population replacement levels between now and 2050.

Australia's population is ageing markedly. Its median age is forecast by the UN to rise from 35.4 years in 2000 to a high 43.4 years by 2050, with an accompanying decrease in the percentage of young people in the population. The bulk of the age group aged 15-59 providing the working population will see its size fall from 62.8% of the population in 2000 to 53% by 2050 (that is, 15 005 000 out of a total of 28 041 000). This is a critical demographic characteristic as a declining working population can result in lower productivity and slower economic growth. In the over 60s age group, the percentage of the total population rises sharply from 16.5% in 2000 to 30.2% by 2050 (that is, 8 462 000 out of a total of 28 041 000). Similarly, the relative size of the elderly age group aged 80 and above goes up from 2.9% in 2000 to 9.3% by 2050 (that is, 2 602 000 out of 28 041 000).

Australia's age dependency ratio is therefore forecast to undergo a significant shift in the coming decades. Out of a total of 49 age-dependent people versus 100 working people in 2000, the age dependency ratio for child-to-old age was 31:19. However, by 2050, this ratio is likely to have been reversed: out of a high total of 69, the child-to-old age ratio is expected to become 27:41. To have 69 age-dependent people for every 100 working age people means working people are heavily outnumbered by dependent people in the society. This will exert economic pressure at a time when the country faces deep challenges.

For both demographic and ecological reasons, I expect pressure on the Australian population and its economy to increase gradually but steadily in the time ahead.

²⁴ These forecasts of population increase do not factor in potential impacts of climate change discussed above and may prove optimistic.

²⁵ The country's crude birth rate is expected to decline from 12.7 births per 1,000 population in 2000-2005 to 10.9 births per 1,000 by 2045-2050.

²⁶ The global median TFR (Total Fertility Rate) is expected to be just above 2 by 2050.

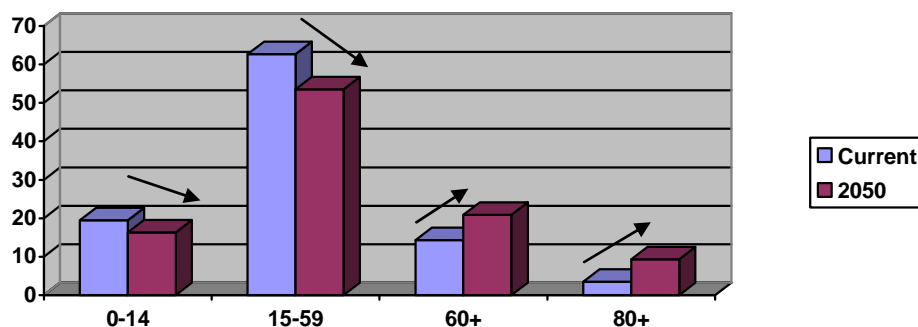


Figure 1: Changing Proportions for Population Age Groups in Australia: Current to 2050

Expressed as % of Total Population

Some of these demographic shifts can be seen in Figure 1. It shows the older and elderly sectors of society increasing and the younger population groups shrinking. By 2050, Australia will be a demographically old society.²⁷ The country's proportion of the working population (ages 15-59) as % of total population will go down from 62.8% to 53% by 2050. Older people are more prone to chronic illnesses and typically need more health care than those in younger age groups, increasing costs of dependency to society. They also spend less. On the whole, though, Australia's demographic profile looks fairly stable, with the exception of the far-reaching implications of its low birth rate and its ageing character.

Regarding racism and social inclusion, the other key social issue of the future, one challenge will be effecting a full reconciliation with the Aborigines, the continent's indigenous people, such that they become equal, fully empowered citizens integrated into a whole Australian society. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states: "Australia faces the mutually reinforced challenges of boosting labour supply and promoting social inclusion. Labour under-utilisation is especially prevalent among groups such as lone parents, people with disability, and Indigenous Australians."²⁸

To understand the Aborigine question, some history is needed.

²⁷ The UN defines an old population in demographic terms as having more than 7% of its population as 65 or over.

²⁸ "Enhancing labour utilisation in a socially inclusive society in Australia" <http://www.oecd.org/australia/>

It is thought Aborigines arrived on the continent some 40,000-60,000 years ago and that by the time of white settlement in 1788, millennia later, they had grown to a population of between 300,000 and 1 million. For many decades after 1788, they were still the majority population group in the country. However, due to the impact of foreign diseases brought in by European settlers, especially small pox epidemics, and conflict, their population size fell drastically to 66,000 by 1933. Fortunately, their population has recovered and now numbers around 250,000.²⁹

Controversial Australian feminist and author of *The Female Eunuch*, Dr Germaine Greer, wrote a searing article in the UK's The Guardian newspaper in 2007 called "Worlds Apart" in which she stated: "Ever since white men set foot in Australia more than 200 years ago, they have persecuted, harassed, tormented and tyrannised the people [Aborigines] they found there."³⁰ She rightly laments the high suicide rate among Aborigines: "In 2005, suicide accounted for 4.3% of Aboriginal deaths, compared with 1.6% of other Australians."³¹

In 1965, Aboriginal activism took its well-documented Freedom Ride which did not achieve anything other than symbolic recognition for the plight of the indigenous people at a time when "Aborigines in country towns remained economically depressed, socially disadvantaged and marginalised by white decision-makers."³² An organised campaign for their land rights began in 1972. By the mid-80s Aborigines had legally gained some 6% of Australia. Then came the landmark Mabo³³ decision of the Australian High Court Five on 3 June 1992 (Mabo v Queensland, No 2), a historic day of significance for the future of the country. The High Court overturned the legal doctrine of *terra nullius* ("land belonging to no one") in favour of the common law doctrine of aboriginal title, fully recognising native title in Australia on the basis of prior occupancy of the land for the first time.

The process of evolving towards equal rights and power for Aborigines in Australia received a setback in 1999 when a proposal to add a preamble to the constitution recognising Aborigines as the nation's first people was heavily defeated in a referendum. Yet the preamble would have simply stated an historical fact everyone knows is true. This kind of cultural denialism does not bode well for the period of change ahead. Nevertheless, one would expect to see greater economic, legal and political power being granted to Aborigines in this generation. That change is likely to be accompanied by some conflict.

²⁹ Cambridge Encyclopedia, 4th Edition. 2000. p.27.

³⁰ Germaine Greer, "Worlds Apart". The Guardian 3 July 2007 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/03/australia> In 2008, Greer has published an essay entitled "On Rage" exploring the roots of anger among male Aborigines as a result of their emasculation by white Australian society.

³¹ Germaine Greer, "Worlds Apart". The Guardian 3 July 2007 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jul/03/australia>

³² Clark (2008), Chapter 8.

³³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eddie_Mabo and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mabo_v_Queensland_\(No_2\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mabo_v_Queensland_(No_2))

In addition to demoting Aborigines to second-class citizens, Australia maintained a White Australia Policy (WAP) until the 1970s: “Until the early 1970s, Australia maintained a ‘White Australia policy’ and virtually banned immigration from its Asian neighbours, a policy that understandably angered them. Only within the last 25 years has Australia belatedly become engaged with its Asian neighbours, come to recognize its place as being in Asia, accepted Asian immigrants, and cultivated Asian trade partners.”³⁴

Recently one of Australia’s most respected neurosurgeons, Dr Charles Teo, son of Chinese immigrants, stated categorically that racism still prevails today in Australia.³⁵ The organisation All Together Now tracks racism in Australia and claims that 20% of the population has experienced racial abuse with an increase in the number of victims of racial discrimination from 1 in 10 in 2011 to 1 in 7 in 2012. It has found that three in every four indigenous Australians have experienced racism and 1 in ten Australians hold racist attitudes.³⁶ The nation’s historical wound of racism has clearly not yet been healed. These figures show that this wound is festering.

Problems of race and social exclusion, especially when they have deep roots in a country’s history, can lead to outbursts of social unrest and violence.

In conclusion, Australia’s future will be shaped by its responses to these ecological and social issues. A time of change and economic challenges will take place within a shifting strategic context in a region near East Asia which is the main global battleground for supremacy between two powers and their allies – the USA and China.³⁷

In this evolutionary process, four broad scenarios may describe the most probable landscapes of Australia’s future for this century.

³⁴ Diamond, J (2005), p. 395.

³⁵ “Racism very much alive in Australia, says Dr Charles Teo” by Stephen Drill & Henry Budd, Herald Sun , 19 January 2012 – www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/racism-very-much-alive-in-australia

³⁶ Racism in Australia, All Together Now – www.alltogethernow.org.au/racism

³⁷ One extreme – and unlikely - scenario would see China attack Australia to control the largest uranium mine in the world as China seeks to build two nuclear power stations per year for the next twenty years.

The **“Queen’s Land” Future** sees an alliance of the powerful mining lobby, social conservatives and royalists resisting the forces of ecological, social and racial change. In this scenario, Australia attempts to preserve the *status quo* in a business-as-usual policy, quelling all the inevitable social unrest that will arise with increasing force. I give this future a maximum shelf life of 40 years before it disintegrates in disorder and permanent ecological collapse.

In the **Overshoot Future**, Australia fails to adequately address its compelling ecological challenges, allowing its environment and eco-systems to degrade and collapse in the deluded interests of maintaining high economic growth rates at all costs. This approach would lead to depopulation of some of its major cities, a shrinking population and the bankruptcy of its agriculture.

In the **Kangaroo Leap Future**, Australia effectively addresses its ecological problems but fails to make sufficient progress in dealing with its social, historic and demographic issues. Flannery describes the kangaroo as “the continent’s most successful evolutionary product”³⁸ and in this scenario, the Australian government develops dramatic, cutting-edge policies to address climate change to attain sustainability. By so doing, it buys time for the economy but postpones its day of cultural reckoning, choosing, rather, to remain under the British Crown and offering only a cold embrace to Aboriginal and Asian cultures. This future would last a few decades before the Aborigine and Asian populations of Australia become too powerful to ignore. Social unrest would increase until social justice prevails for all Australians.

In the **Uluru-Ayers Rock**³⁹ **Future**, Australia solves its ecological problems, makes peace with the Aborigine population, becomes an independent Republic, fully embraces Asia and Asian cultural influences, and eventually becomes a strategic ally of Asian powers.

³⁸ Flannery (2004), Introduction “Vanished Country”.

³⁹ The Uluru-Ayers Rock is chosen as a symbol of this optimal future for Australia because it is not only an amazing natural phenomenon, an island mountain of outstanding beauty and significance, but it is evocative of many values which would drive this kind of scenario. Firstly, the mountain has survived due to the way it is formed whilst most surrounding rock formations have eroded and disappeared. Key to its endurance and strength is its homogeneity. Australians of all races and ethnic backgrounds will need to unite and become one people to survive future changes and challenges. Uluru is also in absolute harmony with its environment. The mountain is adaptive – it changes colour in different light, from grey to rusty red-brown colour. Finally, it stands proudly upwards near the centre of the country, symbolising the strength that comes from being centred and rooted. Uluru is a rock for all seasons and all epochs.

To attain its Uluru Future, Australia would need to achieve many, or all, of these milestones:

- Address deep-seated ecological issues and develop new population and immigration policies based on environmental sustainability in a time of climate change
- Choose its future above its past and its geography above its history
- Become a Republic
- Negotiate a political settlement with the Aboriginal people
- Integrate Aboriginal, Asian and European cultures in a new Asian Pacific multi-culturalism
- Embrace Asia Pacific strategic relationships

Given powerful environmental and social challenges facing the nation, doing nothing will itself be a standpoint. It is doubtful whether a default future would produce any desirable outcomes for Australia outside of short-term economic gains. Doing nothing is therefore not an option. And any contradictions in policy will serve merely to reinforce the likelihood of the Overshoot Future.

It is perhaps a 50/50 situation which path to the future Australia will take, whether the “Queen’s Land” Future, the Overshoot Future, the Kangaroo Leap Future or the Uluru Future or some variation of these broad evolutionary paths.

What is certain is that these powerful emerging conditions will eventually force far-reaching historic decisions to be made by the leaders and people of Australia.

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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); “Enhancing labour utilisation in a socially inclusive society in Australia” <http://www.oecd.org/australia/>