



# REVOLUTIONISING ECOLOGY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Re-imagining diversity, ecosystems  
and place-based knowledges

Incoming President's Address

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# Past Presidents and Board Members, funders, sponsors, editorial boards



# Special Thanks

- Karen Morrison
- Lisa Crump
- EcoHealth Journal Staff
- Office Holders

# Overview

- Central concept germane to human health
- Evidence loss of species and ecosystems present unprecedented challenges.
- ‘Diversity’ as a survival imperative.
- Going beyond traditional health approaches – ‘The final frontier’.
- Impact on mental health and wellbeing.

# In December 2013

- Oceania EcoHealth Chapter was signed at Ecohealth Symposium in Melbourne, hosted by Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit.
  - Brought together environmentalists, artists, poets, Indigenous peoples, wet land conservationists, medical anthropologists, designers, film makers and health care providers, public health specialists and allied health professions, regenerative farmers, authors, teachers, scientists, veterinarians, virologists, collective thinkers and actors in the same room.

# At this Symposium:

- Discuss collective learning and apply it in the Oceania context by showcasing Professor Valerie Brown's work.
- Explore how the Oceania EcoHealth Chapter could develop.
- Increase dialogue around diversity - a key feature of the Oceania EcoHealth Chapter.
- Present practices that support the relationships between peoples, landscapes and social health.

# EcoHealth: A Personal Understanding

- A process to give meaning and value to ecosystems approaches to health and wellbeing.
- Work with a set of principles at regional levels.
- Promoting reciprocal relationships and association between the environment and health
- Break down silos, knowledge and disciplinary divides.
- Promote knowledge exchange, engagement and action
- Close the gap between environmental stewardship and public health
- Honour and centralise Indigenous and place based knowledges in the world, apply strength based approaches across health and environmental issues of our time.

# What held this diverse group together?

- The central tenet of human health and well being is ‘country’:

*“The bottom line is we need to conceive of ourselves as an integral part of the eco-community of this planet, or we perish....”*

- Over 300 languages in Australia, language strongly correlates to eco systems, over 300 unique eco systems that gave us our meaning, give us our human experience of country.

# What are we responding to?

## 'Anthropocene' to 'Ecozoic' Era

- Evidence - loss of species, loss of ecosystems represents an unparalleled set of global public health challenges.
- Ecosystems receive little attention, despite providing a non-negotiable basis for the food, water, livelihoods and living systems on which we depend.
- Disasters – planning, responding, movement.
- Sixth largest mass extinction across the world.
- Humans now literally 'hold the world in our hands'



# Global megatrends that will change the way we live

## More from less

- The earth has limited supplies of natural mineral, energy, water and food resources essential for human survival and maintaining lifestyles.

## Going, going ... gone?

- Many of the world's natural habitats, plant species and animal species are in decline or at risk of extinction.



# We need a future perspective and position ourselves accordingly

## **The silk highway**

- Coming decades will see the world economy shift from west to east and north to south.

## **Forever young**

- The ageing population is an asset. Australia and many other countries that make up the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have an ageing population.

## **Virtually here**

- This megatrend explores what might happen in a world of increased connectivity where individuals, communities, governments and businesses are immersed into the virtual world to a much greater extent than ever before.

## **Great expectations**

- This is a consumer, societal, demographic and cultural megatrend. It explores the rising demand for experiences over products and the rising importance of social relationships

# Diversity is a survival imperative

- ‘Monocultures of the Mind’ – to ‘Diversity as a way of life’.
  - Get out of systems established to privilege one gender of one race, of one species.
  - Transition from ‘suicide economies’ (agriculture – chemicals, genetically modified food, global economies relying on monocultured crops) to ‘living economies’ - ethical duty we have to the Earth and to future generations.
  - *“Cultivating and conserving diversity is no luxury in our times: it is our survival imperative.”*

# Diversity requires us to become uncolonised – all of us.

- Regenerative farmers – decolonising.
- Indigenous peoples – decolonising.
- Everyday consumers – decolonising from the culture of colonisation.
- Decolonising methodologies – transdisciplinarity, coherence and conciliation.
- Decolonising country – making the invisible visible, placing country at our centre; non-hierarchical relationships in country - defined contexts.



# Going Beyond:

- Effective research, policy and practice requires geographical appropriate and landscape specific actions to tackle global environmental challenges.
- Take control of policy production and implementation – develop frameworks that tackle ecological, economic and health agendas – more holistic approaches.
- Create community hubs, develop research capacity, influence policy and practice to ensure learning's beyond isolated projects to foster innovation.

# Public Health/Mental Health futures:

- Understanding that
  - Sustainability and wellbeing are integrally linked.
  - It is not possible to address health of people, place, planet, without consideration of these intersections.
  - Sociological systems are contextualised in ecosystems – these ecosystems are the primary context of our living.
  - Green spaces have a health benefit – context of built up areas and country.
  - Public health is **DOMINATED** by discourse of social determinants of health – recognise that environments and natural resources provide a foundation for socio-economic factors. Move to Planetary determinants of health.

# How do we make the “Care for Country Principle” the central tenet for living, for billions of people?

- Shift to ‘collective learning’
  - Indigenous to the Universe: indigeneity, citizenship and ecological relationships.
  - Logus in Locus: peoples, landscapes, health.
- Respect for ‘Elders’ from Indigenous, organic and academic communities.
- Understand our ‘being’ is embedded in complex social-ecological systems.
- Place-based engagement strategies.

# A re-visioned Manifesto: Our Phoenix Moment

**Members and the Board:** *JK Rowling....*

## **12 months**

Need to understand our niche, values, focus, evolving ideas and opportunity in an increasingly 'crowded space'.

Transition from EcoHealth to a Eco-Socio-Cultural Health Frame: In Regions across the world.

What is the benefit of our membership?

*So why do I talk about the benefits of failure? Simply because failure meant a stripping away of the inessential. I stopped pretending to myself that I was anything other than what I was, and began to direct all my energy into finishing the only work that mattered to me.*

*Had I really succeeded at anything else, I might never have found the determination to succeed in the one arena I believed I truly belonged.*

*I was set free, because my greatest fear had been realised, and I was still alive, and I still had a daughter whom I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became the solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life.....*

# What we are able to do in our little piece of the world.

- Social Media @Ecohealth13 @Ecohealth14
- Webinars with people who are part of the Oceania Ecohealth Group and student projects
- Presentations: People, landscapes and health
- Short courses through University of Melbourne prior to EcoHealth, OneHealth Conference in 2016. Field trips.
- Bring sectors together - challenge their boundaries
- Practice post – normal reconciliation.
- Care for Country initiatives – Parks Victoria/Local Government/ Onemda collaborations.
- Peer reviewed publications.
- Move from deficit to strength based approaches
- Develop new methodologies founded in coherence, diversity and equality

# Involve our members and funding partners:

- Have a role in defining our future as an organisation and our range of relationships.
- Organisational members: workplace giving, volunteers to partner in projects in place (brokerage model); fund raising activities.
- Crowd Funding – successful integration in regional activities.
- Student activities – short courses, projects, communication strategies.
- Flexible, responsive and compassionate response to our aspirations and need to network.

# **Board Activities: Immediate and Future**

**Renegotiate the business and governance relationship with EcoHealth Journal.**

IAEH Founding Agency  
Sustainable Business Case  
& Governance  
MOU Strategic Imperatives  
& Member Subscriptions  
(eg SDG, Food Security)

**Constitutional Reform built on members visioning and engagement.**

**Regionalisation – activating and resourcing the Chapters**

**Build local and regional capacity where required – mechanism for sharing information and partnerships to support regional activity**

**Range of Products and commercialisation opportunities**

**Research Partnerships**

**Scholars and student support**

**Organisational partners and relationships with other knowledge holders (Indigenous peoples, practitioners)**

# Our starting position

- A Unique position that has untapped potential
- Individual members and organisational members
- Unsustainable funding
- Unsupported, unfunded President with no access to the funding resources of the Association.
- Website with capacity to support payments from members.
- Webinars and Student Activities
- Aspirational Statement from Students
- Awards
- Commitment to European Chapter
- Enthusiasm for re-visioning
- Board with a track record of transformation
- Organisations willing to support work of IAEH

# Impact on health and wellbeing

