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## The climate of thinking changes

Happy New Year. 2006 was notable for marked shifts in thinking on sustainable development priorities in Australia – particularly where the climate change agenda was concerned. We can hopefully expect deeper progress on broad-scale solutions in the year ahead as the win-win effects of organisational commitments to sustainable practice are more widely revealed. Imperative action on climate change is leading to new perspectives and action on other sustainability priorities.

Last year, as we watched the weather more intently, the drought scorched urban areas and forced attention, concerted discussion and decision-making on critical water planning across Australia. Meanwhile, in parallel, the climate change discussion built up, influenced by leading initiatives across Europe and Asia, to a historic media crescendo with the successive influences of Al Gore's tour and film release, and Sir Nicholas Stern's landmark economic assessment for the UK Government of the costs of the scenarios around climate change and action.

The Stern Report's hard dollar numbers were tough love, and a 'reality check' in a cost language that the business-driven world understood, as it presses onward with a focus on maintaining growth and profits.

On pages 16–17 Mike Smith muses on the wide influence of Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary that accessibly brought the phenomenon of climate change to the layperson, and struck chords – not uncontroversially – at higher levels in industry and government.

On the issue of maintaining growth and affording the economics of address-



ing climate change in Australia, Dr Steve Hatfield Dodds (pages 12–15) shares thought-provoking perspective on the seemingly small impact that committing early

to climate change mitigation measures may have on our cost of living and financial growth. Policy action only slightly delays the regular doubling of our wealth, and we can still push growth. This echoes other recent assessments, parallels Stern's findings and probably applies to the cost of action on other areas of the sustainability agenda too.

Our Focus on pages 22–27 addresses another subject that could be more widely understood: the critical decline of Australia's integral farmland soils due to land clearing, farming intensity and the export of produce to urban areas. Over time, produce removes the essential nutrients (including carbon, fundamentally) of soils, running them down, without adequate replenishment, and leaving them unproductive and less resilient to weather. The new organics composting industry, which reprocesses waste, is helping with the recharge of farmland soils.

Enjoy your reading.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor



Jamie Evans

## Next, in issue 135

In the February–March issue, Graeme O'Neill reviews the progress and sustainability credentials of genetic modification technology, and we look closely at the future for our cities.