

## The Editorial Advisory Committee

**Molly Harriss Olson** (Chair)  
Director, EcoFutures Pty. Ltd.

**Alexandra de Blas**  
Communications Strategist, Australian Bush Heritage Fund

**Andrew Campbell**  
Consultant, Land & Water Australia

**Dr Steve Hatfield Dodds**  
Research Director, CSIRO Social and Economic Integration, Emerging Science Area

**Mike Smith**  
Research Director, The Natural Edge Project

**Professor Peter Raven**  
Director, Missouri Botanical Gardens, St. Louis, MO, USA

**Dr John White**  
Managing Director, Global Renewables Ltd.

**Chris Baxter**  
Founder, *Wild Magazine*

## Associates

**John Elkington**  
Director, SustainAbility Ltd., London, UK

**Dr Andrew Johnson**  
Group Executive – Environment, CSIRO

**Dr Steve Morton**  
CSIRO Group Executive  
Manufacturing Materials & Minerals

**Graeme O'Neill**  
Science journalist, Science Ink

**Phillip Toyne**  
Director, EcoFutures Pty. Ltd.

**Dr Thomas E. Lovejoy**  
President, The Heinz Centre for Science, Economics and the Environment, Washington, DC

**Karlson 'Charlie' Hargroves**  
Executive Director, The Natural Edge Project

## On the sunny side

Since the last issue we've had a highly anticipated new budget, but it was one that was only moderately well received in the media for its allocations to environment and sustainability matters.

The fact is that after just six months, there were noticeable new funding and policy commitments to some very important areas, and these included the national reserves (parks) system, a 10-year national water policy framework, a green loans program, and investments in reducing neighbouring country deforestation.

The government must be credited with that – it is a solid start, but unfortunately these progress points were largely unheralded in the major media compared to the coverage of the more controversial settings. They included the now much debated change to the qualifying income levels for domestic solar power rebates, and funding allocations to clean-coal technology when new baseload-potential renewable technology research should be prioritised.

But not everyone can be happy, and arguably the shift in the solar rebate levels has set the solar industry back, just when it was hitting its stride after the previous government increased the rebate. But is it a temporary shift of growth?

Looking on the sunny side, perhaps lowering the rebate levels was designed to lower industry pricing too, forcing it within range of the new band of lower income earners that the market must pitch to if it wants to keep cooking. This ultimately drives lower unit costs, and therefore innovation and efficiency in the hardware – good for everyone, and good for the wider deployment of solar outfits. In addition, it helps us be more internationally competitive



against the cost-savaging Asian manufacturers.

In 'DIY generation' on pages 8–10 of this new issue, we look at the role that solar and other advancing domestic-scale power

technologies are starting to play in the evolution of the distributed sustainable energy network. Compared to the current and largely inefficient centralised coal-power grid, on-site power generation should better manage energy efficiency, redundancy, and therefore greenhouse emissions too.

If Australia could eventually follow the Europeans' lead on paying for total feed-in tariffs from domestic solar units, rather than just the excess power, it will greatly encourage this new frontier along.

Finally, this issue highlights the dire need for a review and upgrade of vital national environmental monitoring capabilities (see pages 14–17), and a more consolidated approach to environmental policy (pages 24–26). At the recent Business Leaders' Forum on Sustainable Development (pages 22–23), it was pointed out that \$50–\$100 million annually would allow proper mapping of environmental change to policy and outcomes.

Enjoy your reading.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor



James Porteous

## Next, in issue 144

In the August–September issue we report on the spread of Permaculture's benefits to the world, and profile the leading-edge IMOS ocean monitoring program which is tracking the effects of climate change.