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# The new shape of things to come

This issue begins with news of Dr Graeme Turner's fascinating and timely work to validate the projected 100-year global economic scenarios modelled, back in 1972, in *Limits to Growth* – probably the highest selling environmental book of all time.

Dr Turner's assessments of current trends on various indices show the accuracy of the predictions made by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers – that by the middle of this century, under business-as-usual consumptive practice, we will face extreme environmental and social challenges. This is not new, but it's testament to the MIT team's early work, and to the relevance of models in our navigation of the near future.

His work also deflates some of the resonating criticisms of the at-the-time sensational *Limits to Growth* thesis which have since restricted its broad acceptance. Now, in this more evolved current social context, where the constraints of energy, water, carbon, population and basic resources, such as food, are intersecting, Dr Turner's findings are more reinforcement of the need for a whole-sale change to our habitual ways of living.

Optimistically, US President-elect Obama's early intention to establish a government that both invests in 'green' industry and more concertedly tackles climate change is a marked and influential shift. More importantly, this conviction synchronises with the advice of some key economic experts that the current financial crisis is a golden opportunity for a greener and smarter economy, one which will in turn recondition and recharge prosperity. On pages 26–27 we profile that opportunity.



Our Focus on pages 22–25 catches up on Australia's progress on sustainability education – the real education revolution – and the means by which our next

generations of workers, leaders, teachers and citizens can be deeply equipped to reshape the economy and society away from the business-as-usual scenario. We ought to be hearing more about that in current national curriculum discussions.

Pages 8–11 assess the importance of food management, the impacts that food production, processing, transport and consumption can have on environmental measures, and the need for more consideration in national and regional policy of long-range food strategy issues which account for the increasing constraints in water, energy, carbon and market supply. Food security is becoming a latent issue, and the designs of cities, towns and communities can take that into account, with great associated benefits.

Finally, I invite you to visit our new website at [www.ecosmagazine.com](http://www.ecosmagazine.com), providing weekly news and content updates, as well as access to our extensive back archive. It's your resource, so please give us feedback.

Enjoy your reading, and have a happy, sustainable Christmas.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor



CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

## Next, in issue 147

Our February–March edition looks at the best current proposals for pulling CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere, and assesses how Queensland's ecosystems are rebounding after Cyclone Larry.