

# Editorial

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## Achieving despite the challenges

Our April–May issue covers a number of areas where the challenge of reducing environmental pressures – and particularly greenhouse emissions – is being earnestly met, despite the shadow of financial uncertainty. The message is that we don't need to wait to get on with critical efforts to reform the way we operate.

Our Focus by Robin Taylor on pages 24–27 profiles the impact that sustainability upgrades to our vast stock of existing buildings is having on energy efficiency, and therefore national emissions accounts. In the case of the Existing Buildings Project, up to 40 per cent reductions in energy use are being achieved, because upgrades ultimately make financial sense. Taking into account that around 23 per cent of greenhouse loads come from buildings, the retrofits are appreciable progress.

On pages 30–31, Michael Smith and Charlie Hargroves from The Natural Edge Project team examine international progress on efforts to decouple economic growth from environmental impacts. This can be, and is being, achieved with particular policy settings. Historical cases show how, and although the global carbon emissions challenge is unprecedented in magnitude, countries have successfully mobilised before to dramatically reduce a ubiquitous pollutant while GDP charges ahead. The Netherlands has had particular success and is showing the way forward.

In the Focus on pages 18–21, Rachel Sullivan has brought together some perspective on green vehicles – the latest



in car and truck technology, and the fuels that will power them. There is no doubt that the impetus and incentive for more environmentally efficient vehicles have driven through

the market, with all major manufacturers planning investments in new technologies. Mainstream sales of these vehicles are just around the corner, and that is a historical turning point worth noting.

Finally, on pages 10–13 Mary-Lou Considine provides an update on climate change driven scenarios for our neighbouring oceanic nations, such as Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Carteret Islands – but also for our own islands to the north of Cape York. While some impacts of sea-level rise are, arguably, already being experienced by these communities, projected impacts mean Australia is necessarily considering its capacity and responsibilities to assist large-scale cultural dislocation and adaptation. The good news is there is time to develop solutions and find opportunity.

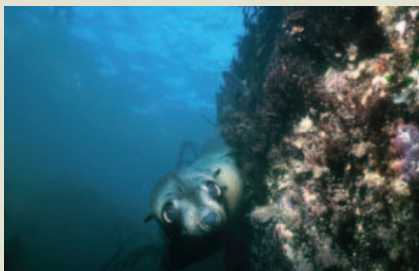
Enjoy your reading.

**James Porteous**  
Managing Editor

### 1974–2009: CELEBRATING 35 YEARS

This year *Ecos* has reached a milestone for independent environmental journalism in Australia: 35 years of communicating sustainability-related research and issues to the public. That makes the magazine one of the world's oldest environment titles.

Thank you for your support.



Graham Blight

## Next, in issue 149

In our June–July issue we report on the outcomes of the 10th National Business Leaders Forum on Sustainable Development and a first-ever marine survey of newly declared Marine Protected Areas on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula.