

## Reasons to hope

Hope can seem in short supply when you work on a magazine that regularly reports on a wide range of negative impacts arising from climate change. But I'm happy to be able to say that many stories in this issue offer solace.

Our story on environmental education in Australian primary schools (p. 16) reveals that the Australian education system is on the front foot in this area. However, there is debate about whether recent federal government policy focuses too narrowly on sustainability to the exclusion of a wider understanding of the natural world and our place in it.

This issue reports (p. 4) on the remarkable achievements of a pair of botanist brothers, Matt and Russell Barrett, who share a passion for the diversity of plant life in the Kimberley. The Barrett brothers have added more to the knowledge of plant species in the area than any other botanists in recent history.

Our story on p. 8 looks at a small pilot forestry program in Laos that is sowing the seeds of a sustainable teak plantation industry. The project, a collaboration between Lao government agencies and international conservation organisations, shows that conservation and biodiversity goals can be compatible with improving farmer livelihoods in impoverished rural communities.

Also in this issue, we explore whether emissions can be brought under control in Australia by means other than an emissions trading scheme (p. 10). Would a carbon tax, for example, meet the needs of key stakeholders, including the energy sector and the wider business community who are clearly after an end to the current uncertainty around carbon pricing? Since this story was written, Australians have had a change of Prime Minister. Perhaps this is an opportunity for a fresh rethink of macroeconomic policy in this area.

Geoengineering in the context of climate change refers to deliberate interventions in the earth's climate systems – examples include injection of sulphate aerosols into the stratosphere and cloud albedo enhancements. Such approaches have traditionally been categorised in the extreme end of climate change management strategies. But, as our story on p. 22 reports, scientific research in this area is well underway and commercial activities to use the research have begun. These technologies have potentially far reaching impacts over very long timescales. Caution is being urged from within and without the scientific community.

Hope and sober warnings come together in this issue of Ecos. Enjoy your reading.

**Michele Sabto and Mary-Lou Considine**

*Note: Managing Editor, James Porteous, is working on other duties.*

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