

GECKO – GOLD COAST & HINTERLAND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL
139 Duringan Street, Currumbin QLD 4223
Ph: (07) 5534-1412; Fax: (07) 5534-1401
Email: info@gecko.org.au Website: www.gecko.org.au

19 April 2004

Environment and Heritage Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au

Attention: Bruce Billson, MP, Chair
Jennie George, MP, Deputy Chair
Harry Jenkins, MP

**SECOND SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO
SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025**

Further to our appearance at 6 April 2004 public hearing in Brisbane, we would like to add some additional comments.

When asked what we would like the Federal Government to do about the concerns that we have, I responded in regard to the protection of world heritage areas, but later realized that there are a range of requests that we would have of Federal Government to address the following issues mentioned in our submission 06/04/04:

1. Sustainable population – The House of Representatives Inquiry into the human carrying capacity of Australia, chaired by Barry Jones, made at least 15 recommendations, none of which have been followed through. We would request that the Federal Government revisits those recommendations and ensures that Australia stays within its carrying capacity.

GECKO – GOLD COAST & HINTERLAND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

2. That the Federal Government stops using the ageing of the population as an excuse to keep building Australia's population beyond its carrying capacity. As stated in The Age, April 29 2002 "Why the ageing of the population should be celebrated" by Kenneth Davidson:

"In the article "Would a decrease in fertility be a threat to living standards in Australia?", by Ross Guest and Ian McDonald in the Australian Economic Review (Vol. 35 No. 1, March, 2002), published by Melbourne University Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, offers an excellent antidote to the special interests that are trying to hitch their stars to the so-called ageing-population crisis.

"Guest and McDonald start from the simple proposition that it is living standards, not demographic ratios or even flat or declining populations, that influence people's wellbeing.

"They argue persuasively that on the conservative basis of a 1-per-cent-a-year rise in the productivity of the workforce, if current rates of fertility and immigration continue, then living standards will be 84 per cent higher in 2050 than today.

"They argue that if fertility drops from the rate of 1.75 today to 1.3 soon, living standards would be 89 per cent higher in 2050 than today. If immigration fell to zero, living standards would be 78 per cent higher in 2050 than today.

"In other words, a fall in fertility would have a slight positive effect on living standards and a fall in immigration would have a slight negative impact. Their conclusion suggests that the age structure of the population is not worth worrying about in terms of its impact on living standards. "

3. That the Federal Government seek to stabilise Australia's population by encouraging low birth rates and by keeping immigration to around the 50,000

GECKO – GOLD COAST & HINTERLAND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

mark. Baby-friendly policies are all well and good, but should not be used to increase the population, that is they should not be given to families beyond the first two children.

4. That the Federal Government reviews the impacts of negative gearing on both the supply and affordability of housing, as well as the connection between this policy and the push of the housing industry for further immigration. Negative gearing tends to increase the housing stock beyond that needed to provide for the current population or that which is sustainable, and also seems to be key in increasing housing costs.
5. That the Federal Government encourage good governance, by ensuring that all elections at every government level are undertaken with rigour and honesty and are removed from the control of the development lobby by:
 - a. imposing a spending limit on all candidates.
 - b. posting how to vote cards for every candidate in every cubicle, eliminating the need for booth workers, and the accompanying cheating with regard to signage and voting instructions.
 - c. requiring a statement of all campaign donations two weeks prior to the election.
 - d. requiring strict adherence to all rules relating to an election, including signage, false and misleading statements, and donations and spendings.
6. That the Federal Government realise that any attempt to move the population growth out to the regions, will result in the inevitable return to the coastal cities due to the fact that the Australian outback is unable to sustain a healthy economy or desirable lifestyle for large numbers of people.


GECKO – GOLD COAST & HINTERLAND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Further to your questions about affordable housing and the ability to accommodate everyone, I would point out that the United Nations had a goal of accommodating an additional 100 million people by 2015, whereas the world's population increases by about 75 million each year. As we submitted to Australia's delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development at Johannesburg, if we don't stabilise and lower population growth, there will be no hope of ever accommodating the increased population.

As the Australian Academy of Sciences points out in its high school textbook, we could stabilise Australia's population with the current birth rate and an immigration level at about 50,000 per annum. The current immigration level of approximately 110,000pa will lead to a population of about 30 million by 2050, which is clearly not sustainable given Australia's low carrying capacity and high biodiversity.

Please see attached Population Policy from Sustainable Population Australia that will hopefully enlighten the committee more about this issue.

Yours faithfully,



Sheila Davis

Campaign Coordinator