

SIGNS OF HOPE FOR WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Mon 5 June 2017



June 5 is World Environment Day. It provides a global opportunity to take account of the state of the environment and our part in protecting the environment for our grandchildren and their children. More than ever we are at risk of passing on a world environment in decay to our heirs.

“Our best scientists tell us insistently that a calamity is unfolding, that the life-support systems of the Earth are being damaged in ways that threaten our survival. Yet in the face of these facts we carry on as usual,” according to Clive Hamilton Professor of Ethics at Charles Sturt University in his latest book : *Defiant Earth: The fate of humans in the Anthropocene*.

The mental target I have set for myself is I want my grandkids children to be able to enjoy the Great Barrier Reef. Another RR, Russell Reichelt, CEO of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, told Senate Estimates last week that **“we've just found out that half of the Great Barrier Reef's coral may have died in the last two years”**. My target is not looking good. We need to work harder to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But there is a green tinge in the world and its needs our support and encouragement as we wait for the “promise for new heavens and a new earth where righteousness is at home”. Let me give you some signs of hope.

The recent Clean Energy Australia report says Australia's renewable energy industry is shaping up for a “boom time” in 2017. At least 30 renewable energy projects will be under construction in 2017 with \$5.2 billion of projects securing finance in the first five months of 2017. The driving force is coming from the renewable energy targets set by the States: ACT- 100% by 2020; Vic- 40% by 2025; Qld 50 % by 2030 and SA 50% by 2025.

In 2016, renewable energy provided 17 per cent of the nation's power demand – its highest in more than half a century (since Snowy Hydro was completed). Interestingly, the states with the most renewables have experienced lower electricity price rises than those states with low renewables. Renewables are bringing down power prices.

And what is encouraging is the green tinge is appearing around the world.

Friday, May 26, was a beautiful late spring day in the UK. All that sunshine led to the nation breaking a solar power record for the second time last month. Total solar power generation amounted to 8.7 gigawatts or 24.3% of demand for a period of time (midday).

And last May, Germany came remarkably close to being completely run by clean energy for a day due to a surge in wind and solar power. That same month, Portugal was powered solely by renewable sources for 107 hours, which is roughly four-and-a-half days, setting the bar higher.

Dutch officials have opened what is being billed as one of the world's largest offshore wind farms, with 150 turbines spinning far out in the North Sea. Over the next 15 years the Gemini

windpark, which lies some 85km (53 miles) off the northern coast of the Netherlands, will meet the energy needs of about 1.5 million people.

President Trump's decision to take the US out of the Paris Climate Change Accord is not good news for the international community and bad news for the poor of the world who live in low lying lands such as in the Ganges Delta in Bangladesh. But his decision is not reflective of the commitments of many Americans.

Georgia's capital and most populous city, Atlanta, recently announced a decision to achieve the 100% renewable energy goal by 2025. Atlanta is following in the footsteps of 26 other municipalities across the U.S. that have announced similar renewable energy goals, including large cities such as San Diego, Salt Lake City and Chicago. Notably, a number of U.S. cities—Aspen, Colorado; Burlington, Vermont; Greensburg, Kansas; Kodiak Island, Alaska; and Rockport, Missouri—have already hit their clean energy targets.

China's capital of Beijing is planning to further cut coal consumption by 30% this year as part of the city's larger efforts to tackle air pollution. In March of 2015, Beijing announced that it was going to close its four major coal-fired power plants in 2016. All part of the plan to completely ban coal use by 2020.

In India, the power ministry has dramatically scaled up the national solar power target of 100 GW by 2022. India's current installed solar capacity is 3 GW, which means 10 GW of new capacity has to be added each year. It's a bold target, but the government is showing political leadership.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), 9.8 million people worldwide currently work in renewable energy. The global employment figure with large hydropower excluded is 8.3 million jobs, but with this sector added the total climbs to almost 10 million. China, unsurprisingly, supports the most renewable jobs with 3.64 million people working in the sector in 2016 – a 3.4% year-on-year increase.

In solar, the U.S., India and China lead the way for employment opportunities, with jobs in the U.S. increasing 17 times faster than the national average. In the past 12 months, the U.S. added 260,000 new solar jobs – a 24.5% increase.

This Environment Day, pray for stronger international action to reduce emissions and make a commitment to support actions to achieve the Paris Agreement target of a maximum temperature rise of 2C. Together we can make Hope real; we can help achieve a sustainable and peaceful world.

“See I am making all things new ... To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life”. Rev 21:5-6

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