

Introduction

By Nick Low President Transport for Melbourne

WELCOME

I can't be here today. At present my domestic duties must prevail over everything else. But I want to thank you all for being here. Every forum of this kind matters.

Everyone here can help us, as a society, look ahead and prepare for what is coming: the climate catastrophe.

In the interests of brevity, I just want to throw one idea into the discussion.

I believe that the 'elephant in the room' is lifestyle change. We cannot get to net zero without changing how we live. None of us – here in Australia or anywhere else represented at Glasgow – want to confront that inconvenient truth.

International negotiations focus on national plans and outcomes, and on production: green hydrogen, wind and solar energy, electric cars. But there is also an individual factor – on the consumption side.

Thomas Piketty, in his recent book *Capital and Ideology*, argues that rising inequality and global heating are twin, closely connected global challenges. Piketty points out that carbon emissions are 'strongly concentrated among a small group of people with high incomes and large fortunes living in the wealthiest countries in the world.'

He argues: 'The magnitude of the lifestyle changes required to cope with the climate crisis is so great that it is hard to imagine how to make those changes socially and politically acceptable without establishing stringent and verifiable norms of justice'.

There will in time be a global price for producing and burning fossil fuels. Australia cannot escape that. But how will that price be shared out, nationally and globally?

Piketty continues: 'No carbon price will be acceptable unless all of the revenue it generates is used to compensate the lower and middle-class households affected by the tax, and to pay for the transition to renewable sources of energy.'

There is so much to discuss in this forum: about the future of our cities, our future mobility, the transport systems that facilitate mobility, and our urban and rural lifestyles: all crucially important practical matters.

But let's not forget how those practical matters are subject to the ideologies, the norms of justice, that govern our society and, in the end, influence the outcomes that can be achieved.

Once again, I thank you all for coming to this forum, and I know you can look forward to some vibrant discussion.

Introduction by Roger Taylor Chair Transport for Melbourne

This forum will build on the forum we held last year – The Future We Must Plan For – a future that will be dominated by environment change – including climate change. As professors David Karoly and Will Steffen said, there is an imperative to reduce emissions now. David advised that to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees – the limit accepted by the G7 group of nations to avoid “dangerous” climate change, it is necessary to reduce emissions by 125% by 2030. Prof Will Steffen has since advised that if we miss the 2030 deadline by only 5 years, the best we can hope is to limit global warming to 2 degrees.

I mention these figures to highlight how quickly the climate situation is changing and the need for a plan. The imperative has shifted from 2050 to achieving major reductions before 2030 – a message that was delivered at the COP26 conference in Glasgow this November with dire consequences if this not achieved.

I should say at this point there is more bad news in the pipeline that will almost certainly shorten this deadline, some of which Prof Karoly discussed after the forum last year.

The purpose of today’s forum will be to examine ways in which this deadline and intermediate milestones can be achieved. We are under no illusions about the scale and complexity of the challenge and its implications. Whilst our principal focus will be on transport, the issues that need to be addressed are systemic and extend beyond transport.

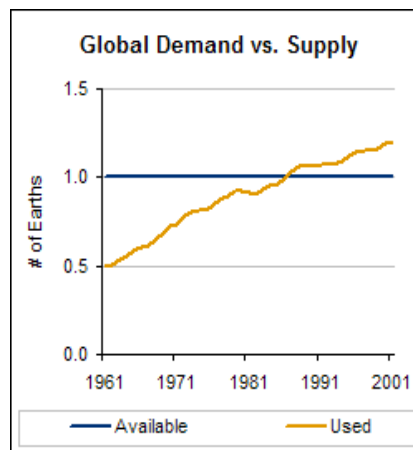
We believe this issue demands serious discussion, but anticipate thinking based on business as usual will not provide the outcomes we need. It will require very different approaches to the ones that have been adopted in the past and this will be challenging.

Our forums have generated many papers which have been published and posted on our web site. Findings and recommendations have also been forwarded as ministerial submissions to government. Both will be the main objectives for this forum.

We have designed this forum as a mini conference rather than a public forum. Speakers have forwarded their presentations in advance, which we have circulated, and will use them as the basis for a shorter presentation. I will then introduce our panel then open it up for discussion – first, amongst panel members then invite questions from our audience.

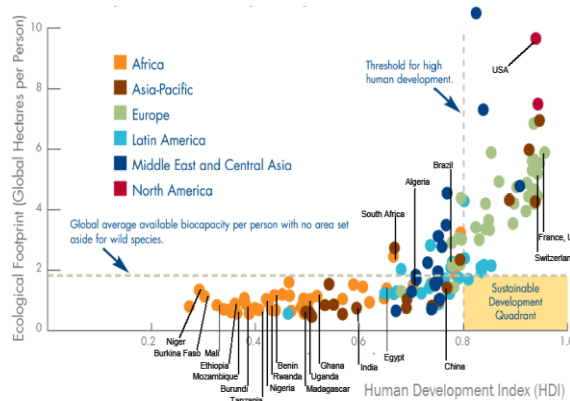
Before I introduce my first speaker it is worth reflecting on the nature of this challenge and what has to change. The environmental imperative is a given – we have to reduce emissions but we are also constrained by the finite nature of the planet we live on, the need to restore the damage caused to the biosphere and limits to growth. I won’t talk about the biosphere today but limits to growth is a real issue – which is demonstrated by the following slides

Slide 1



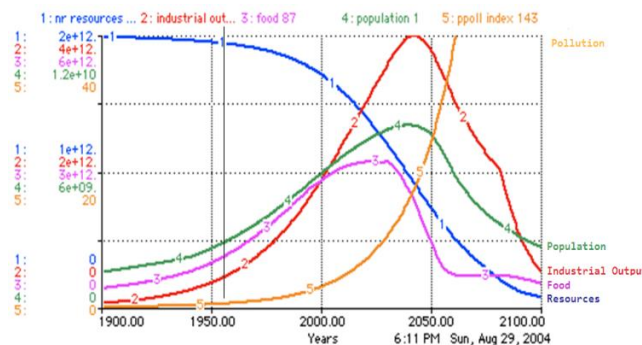
The first shows the global footprint of the human enterprise on planet earth. It increased from half a planet earth in 1960 to more than 1.25 planet earths by 2000 and will be much greater now. Clearly humanity is living well beyond its means and doing so by mining the planet's natural resources. But that is only an average.

Slide 2



The second diagram shows it is only the poorest countries that are living within the means of planet earth. "Advanced" countries require many planet earths to maintain their lifestyles. The US requires about 5 and Australia is not far behind.

Slide 3

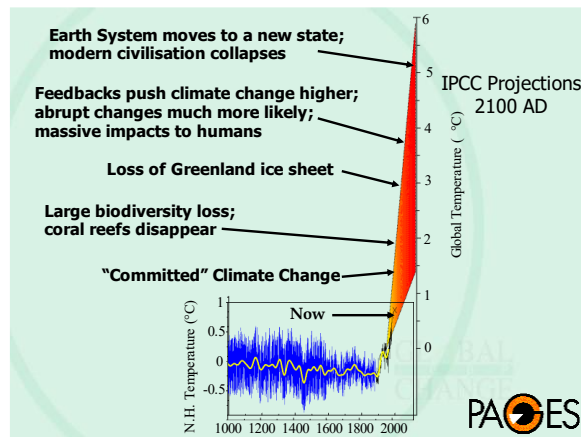


Limits to Growth
Projections for 1900 -2100

Source: Richard Meadows (2004) for The Club of Rome

This thinking is reflected in limits to growth projections made in the first report to the Club of Rome in 1972. Based on the “standard run” or business as usual, the global population would peak before 2050 and rapidly decline to less than a third within about fifty years. According to the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, that figure could be much less and the peak may occur earlier. You don’t need to be a Rhodes Scholar to see where that will end up – misery and tears.

Slide 4



Source: Prof Will Steffen,
Sustainable Cities Sustainable Transport Forum 2009
 Note – the global temperature has increased since to more than 1.1degree – almost 1.2 degrees and any hope of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees which might have been possible in 2009 has almost disappeared.

Limits to Growth projections do not include the impact of climate change, the projections of which are shown in the fourth diagram and make the planet increasingly less habitable and support fewer people. The global population by the end of the century under this scenario could easily be reduced to zero.

So ultimately we are talking about negative growth and the need to consume less of the planet’s resources – not more – for all activities and that includes transport. In the transport context this means less travel and transport less often, less frequently, over shorter distances and more efficiently. Responding to this challenge will require a very different mindset to the one that exists today.

The second point I would like to make is we need to understand transport as a system so we can unpack it to find leverage points that can be used to change it in a way that enables us to meet our environmental targets.

Transport is a service industry, a derived demand. In the city context it is a function of

- the broader economy (primarily local but also national and global)
- the characteristics of the city itself
- and the social, economic and political environment in which it operates.

All of these can change and all provide potential levers that can be used to meet environmental targets and we will talk about this later in the forum.