

## Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2018

The 2018 SEFF was held on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June and was run by Swanpool Landcare and Benalla Sustainable Future Group. Sponsors for the event were the GBCMA, Gecko CLaN, Benalla Permaculture, Granite Creeks Landcare Network and Benalla Rural City (via BSFG).

This annual event is run in three sessions and the fabulous Swanpool Catering Team provides afternoon tea and dinner during the breaks. It's always excellent but this year they excelled with tasty Asian style rice dishes, vegetable tart and the fruit platters.

The guest speakers and films for the afternoon sessions really dovetailed together well. Dr Sam Alexander from Melbourne University gave the opening talk on 'Life in a degrowth economy and why you might actually enjoy it' followed by the film 'Living in the Future's Past'. Discussion around 'degrowth' centred on the definition of real human wealth versus our focus on GDP. The more we spend on disasters for instance the more GDP rises. A Tiny House on a trailer, parked adjacent to the hall, was supportive of the 'simpler living' theme. Thanks to Neil and Sandy Garrett of Violet Town for bringing it along.

Dr Charles Massy from ANU took the stage following afternoon tea with his talk on 'Can regenerative agriculture help save the world?' This was highly appreciated by the switched on audience. The slides displayed on the screen told much of the story; just compare one side of the fence to the other. The promotion of non-organic fertilizers and chemicals was also addressed with their negative effects on soil and human health. Charles' book 'Call of the Reed Warbler' was on sale at the event, thanks to 'Country Tales' Mansfield bookshop, and is highly recommended reading.

The second film 'Living the Change' was introduced by the co-director Jordan Osmond and his enthusiasm for the material shone through. The film starts off setting the scene then presents the stories of New Zealand individuals, families and communities who embrace change for a more sustainable and less wasteful lifestyle. Questions from the audience were all about what we could do locally in our own environment.

The evening session was a bit different from past years. A panel consisting of Prof Kate Auty, Dr Ian Herbert, Shirley Saywell and Bertram Lobert gave brief presentations on community voices and democracy, climate change, Strathbogie Forest under climate change and local actions to protect the forest. Anthony Chisholm supplied stunning video footage for the latter and Mick Frewin gave an impassioned testimonial as to why he is engaged in forest actions. The panel discussion concluded with a unanimous vote asking the government of the day to enact a climate policy.

'Paper Trail' was the last film and was produced in 1992. It is still very relevant. Starting with NSW and Gippsland logging it follows those logs through wood-chipping at Eden and transport to Japan to be made into paper then final recycling for just a fraction. What's changed in a quarter century? Just the site of the woodchip mills, the destination of the ships (China now) and the extent of state forests felled for this voracious trade. The film concluded with feasible alternatives for paper making – plantation timber or fast growing industrial hemp.

How do we measure the success of this annual event? Numbers through the door is one measure (we had a full house) but the real measure is how the audience responds to the speakers and films. They didn't go away with a warm fuzzy feeling (there are too many pressing environmental concerns for that) but they did go home better informed and motivated. With Australia's greenhouse gas emissions continuing to rise (set now to miss the 2020 Kyoto target) and our land and forests under stress and threat, it's up to each of us to act locally and nationally and press for change.

We thank our speakers and our sponsors and all our volunteer support once again for making SEFF 2018 such a stand out environmental film festival.

Ian Herbert  
Event Coordinator