

The Green Institute  
Annual Report  
2020



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# Executive Director's Report

**W**hat an extraordinary year. 2020 will go down as history-making in so many ways, as well as an immense struggle, marked by tragedy and devastation. But, unexpectedly, it's also tinged with real hope; the hope that can be found in people coming together through adversity, working collectively to create a better world.

Looking back on everything The Green Institute has done over 2020, I'm immensely proud that we've played a crucial role in cultivating that hope, creating space for people to come together, contributing to the story of the year being, in the end, one which points to that better future.

The Green Institute had exciting plans for this year that revolved around practical projects of participatory democracy, using hands on experiments to build experience and expertise amongst Greens, and demonstrate the effectiveness of these processes to drive both policy and political outcomes. In the brief window between the fires and the pandemic, we pulled off some fantastic conversations in Canberra and Melbourne, focussed on climate and democracy, at the People's Climate Assembly and Climate Emergency Summit. We had just launched a piece of work on the review into the Commonwealth environment laws when the virus arrived in Australia and, like so many others, we had to "pivot".

The Green Institute held what we are confident was the first webinar in Australia addressing the social and political impacts of the pandemic - "Staying Together While Keeping Apart" - within days of lockdowns arriving in this country. A brilliant, wide-ranging conversation featuring diverse community leaders from across the continent, the event proved immensely popular, and we swung into planning a series of "Covid democracy" webinars that formed the backbone of the year's work.

In addition to our 11 webinars involving 31 speakers and countless ideas, the Institute took part in a range of external webinars hosted by ANU's RegNet where I am a Visiting Fellow, the Climate Action Network Australia, SA Greens MP Mark Parnell, Humanists Australia, and the US-based Building Belonging, discussing various aspects of the political and social implications of the pandemic. We also had 8 articles published on these questions, ranging from short reflections to op eds in The Guardian and Canberra Times to major essays in Meanjin and Arena, bringing the Institute and our ideas to a wide audience.

Universal Basic Income was planned to be a central aspect of this year's work, with the Basic Income Earth Network Congress having been scheduled for Brisbane in September and the Institute to play a key role. Sadly, the Congress was cancelled, but the Institute pivoted to coordinating a series of conversations with leading advocates in Australia about the prospect of using the Covid moment to increase momentum towards a UBI. These conversations led to the drafting and presentation of an Open Letter to the National Cabinet calling for an emergency Liveable Income Guarantee, signed by over 900 people and receiving media attention. In addition to this and several articles and conference presentations on UBI, we conducted an opinion poll, finding 58% popular support for UBI, which also secured media coverage.

The Assembly For The Future was one of the year's most remarkable events, and the Institute was delighted to play a role. Theatre meets democracy meets visioning project, it brought great depth to the conversations about the future held this year. As a facilitator of the participatory conversations around the Assembly, and creator of "Dispatches" in response, I found it both challenging and inspiring, and the pieces I wrote for the Dispatches are in some ways my most interesting writing this year.



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Another external project we were delighted to be invited to take part in was the Commons Social Change Library's Reset Reading Group, which brought over 1000 people across the country together in reading groups. The Institute curated the readings on Revitalising Democracy, again bringing our work to a receptive new audience.

This year, we also began a new era with Green Agenda, moving to quarterly journal publication, with the second edition currently in preparation. The first GA Quarterly brought together fantastic Green voices discussing a "Post Covid Future", and the second is on the theme "fire". Please explore these excellent contributions and consider writing for future editions.

Thank you to all the brilliant speakers at our webinars and events, to everyone who attended and took part in discussions, to our generous donors and supporters, to the many Greens MPs who continue to champion our work, and to our board and staff, without whom our work would be impossible.

Here's to 2021 allowing us all space to explore these ideas together!

**Tim Hollo**  
Executive Director



# Webinars

**L**ast summer we witnessed the stirrings of ecological collapse in Australia on a grand scale. The impacts of the pillaging of our land and the pollution of our atmosphere by those who care only about short term profits became impossible to ignore.

In this context, the statutory review of the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) provided a tremendous opportunity to shift our political conversation from prioritising profits and managing destruction towards ecological democracy, earth-centred governance, a presumption of protection.

In our 11 March webinar [Environmental Protection Laws After The Fires: Learn About The EPBC Act Review And How To Make A Submission](#), The Green Institute welcomed Dr Michelle Maloney from the Australian Earth Laws Alliance and Revel Pointon from the Environmental Defenders Office, as well as many interested people from across Australia, to a webinar to discuss how we should respond to the review.

[Discover the resources from this webinar.](#)

Then came COVID 19.

Just as coronavirus was reaching Australia and we were beginning to grapple with what a pandemic response might look like, The Green Institute called a snap webinar, [Staying Together While Keeping Apart](#), to discuss how to ensure that, through looming lockdowns, we continue the vital work of cultivating connection, cohesion and democracy.





The conversation, possibly the first Covid-focussed webinar in Australia, was a tremendous success, showing a huge appetite for conversations about the implications of the pandemic for social and political change.



Visual artist Will Bessen, who was in quarantine after returning from overseas, captured the spirit of the webinar in this incredible drawing above.

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So we decided to develop the idea into a series on Covid Democracy, exploring in depth the possibilities of this moment for the kind of deep, systemic change we know we need.

As part of the Covid Democracy Series, we hosted 10 conversations featuring 29 speakers, discussing countless ideas, from Indigenous democracy to cooperatives to Universal Basic Income.

Here, collected for ease of reference, are links to the videos of the ten webinars:



1

## Staying Together While Keeping Apart

with Holly Hammond, Tim Lo Surdo, El Gibbs, Nicola Paris, Millie Rooney, Meg Clark and Natalie Osborne.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/together-while-apart-webinar>



2

## Indigenous Democracy

with Lidia Thorpe and Dr Tjanara Goreng Goreng.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/inspiration-on-indigenous-democracy/>



3

## Democracy and Universal Basic Income

with Guy Standing, Jane Goodall and Abigail Boyd.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/is-democracy-possible-without-ubi/>

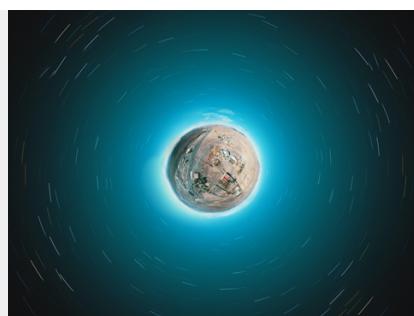


4

## Democracy from the Local to the Global and Back Again

with Prof Carolyn Hendriks and Scott Ludlam

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/democracy-at-a-moment-of-rupture/>





5

## Facing Up To Catastrophic Risks

with Dr Arnagretta Hunter and Julian Cribb

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/facing-up-to-catastrophic-risks/>



6

## Cooperatives for a Democratic Covid Recovery

with Prof Katherine Gibson and Dan Musil

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/talking-cooperatives-for-a-democratic-covid-recovery/>



7

## Sharing, Caring, Co-creating and Co-governing

with Julie Miller Markoff from Bendigo's bHive and Nat Defriend from London's Participatory City.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/sharing-caring-co-creating-co-governing/>



8

## Reset Reading Group

with Holly Hammond, Roj Amedi and Amanda Tattersall.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/turn-it-off-and-on-again/>



9

## Building Community to Fight Fossil Fuels

with Julie Lyford and Dr Amanda Cahill.

<https://www.greeninstitute.org.au/building-community-to-stop-fossil-fuels/>



10

## Green Agenda's Where to From Here? Imagining a Post-Covid Future

with Maiy Azize, Dr Joe McCarthy and Senator Rachel Siewert.

<https://greenagenda.org.au/events/imagining-a-post-covid-future/>



# Public Forums & Special Events



In February, Tim presented a speech at ‘[Democracy is not a spectator sport](#)’, a forum and participatory conversation with Coalition of Everyone, Melbourne. The panel talked boldly on why a healthy democracy matters, the key signs that tell us we need to improve our democracy, and big and tangible ideas that will deepen democracy so we can catapult ahead, together.

Also prior to Covid restrictions, Tim presented at the ‘[Citizen Act](#)’ forum at the Climate Emergency Summit in Melbourne, discussing how we can deepen our democratic engagement and grow the power of communities to keep the transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewables accountable and just.

Tim co-hosted several participatory assemblies at the XR event ‘[People’s Climate Assembly](#)’

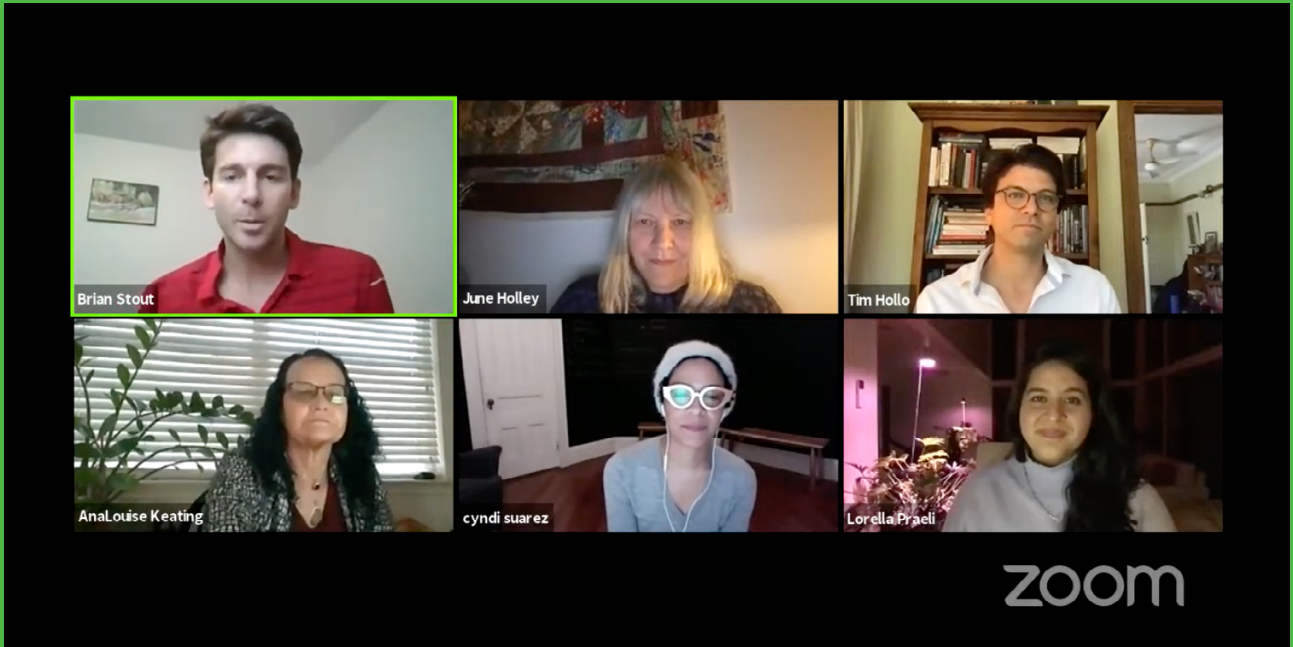
During lockdowns and restrictions, Tim presented at quite a few online panels and webinars:

- Introduced a collection at the Reset Reading Group on [Revitalising Democracy](#)
- Assembly For The Future / [Dispatch from the Future: Reflections on a Post-Post-Truth Future](#)
- [Finding Agency in a Time of Ecological Crisis](#), hosted by RegNet, ANU
- Climate Action Network [“Brown Bag Lunch”](#)
- “After the pandemic” hosted by SA Greens and Mark Parnell.

And once things started opening up again, Tim spoke at an important rally at the Bernard Collaery hearing “[Government of, by and for the fossil fuel industry](#)” (*image 1*). And continued presenting at both physical and online conferences.

- Leadership in a Changing World: [Post-Oppositionality and Belonging](#) (*image 2*)
- [Universal Basic Income panel](#) at the New Economics Network Australia national conference
- “[And the Walls Became the World All Around](#)”, a speech at Economythologies conference
- Humanists Australia launched with a Launch-a-Palooza, running events from International Human Rights Day, 10-13 December. Tim presented a speech on [The Importance of Community](#).





# Articles

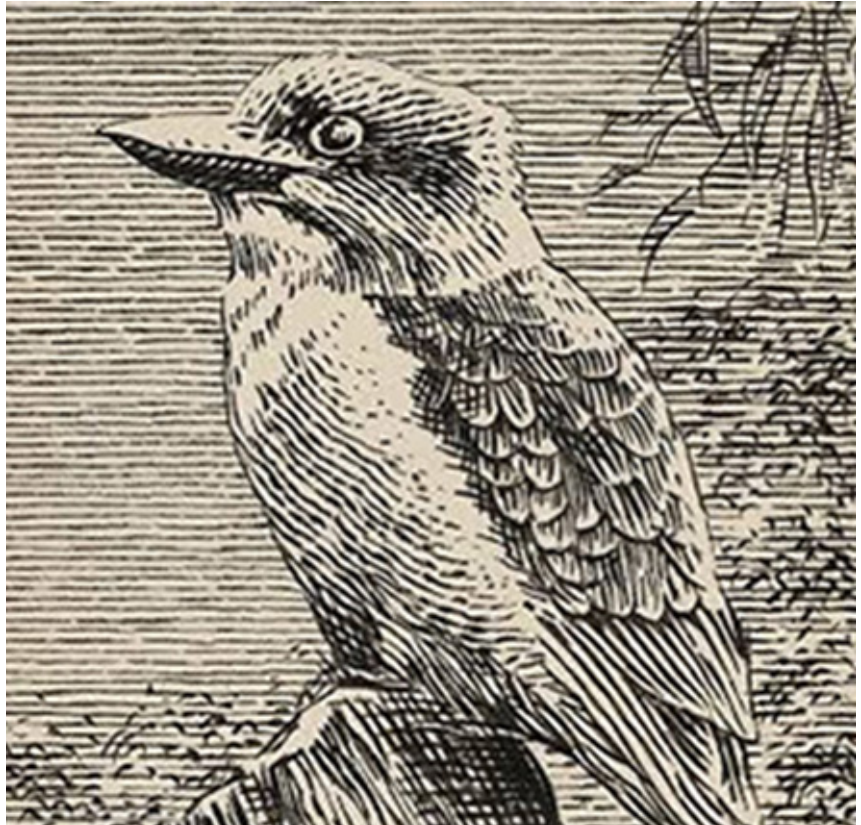
**I**n 2020 Tim was commissioned by New South Press to write a book about Ecological Democracy, to be published in 2021. Additionally, he wrote for a range of publications throughout the year.

[The End of the World As We Know It,](#)  
in Meanjin Quarterly

“We’re living at the end of the world as we know it. And, some of the time, when I squint, turn my head, and look at it from a particular angle, I feel fine.”

[With the Climate Crisis and Coronavirus bearing down on us, the age of disconnection is over,](#)  
in The Guardian.

“A pandemic, more than almost any other phenomenon, shows that all our lives are inextricably intertwined, for now and forever, whether we like it or not. It brings into sharp focus the impossibility of trying to keep economics, health, environment, education and social justice treated as separate questions with separate answers. It heightens awareness of our vital need, as social beings, to stay connected to each other as well as we possibly can while keeping our physical distance.”



[“Can Coronavirus Help Us Reshape Power?”](#)  
in Meanjin Quarterly

“A virus named because it is shaped like a crown is painting the starkest picture in generations of how power operates now and how it might be different. Are we bold enough to follow where it’s pointing us? So tiny we can’t see it without a microscope, yet it’s bringing the behemoth of the global economy to its knees. The invisible crown, inherited from our wild cousins thanks to our careless ecocide, is dragging down massive corporations, shuttering streets, and turning countless lives upside down.”

World Environment Day, Black Lives Matter, and confronting extractivism,  
in The Green Institute

“The same historical processes, and the same ethics of domination and alienation, lie behind colonialism, systemic racism, class divisions, economic inequality, patriarchy, and environmental destruction. At the heart of all these injustices is extractivism – the idea that one set of people (essentially white men) has the right to dominate and extract value from everyone and everything else.”

Is it time to rethink work as we know it?  
in The Canberra Times

“As much as anything else, amidst the tragedy, this moment gives us the opportunity to rethink the nature of work in our society. Instead of mouthing marketing slogans, we could challenge deeply held assumptions about how we work, for whose benefit, and why.”

There's No Time Left Not To Do Everything,  
in Arena

“In order to both turn around ecological collapse and generate the collective resilience that our societies need to survive and thrive in the decades ahead, we need to cultivate new democratic norms and institutions, based on the principles of ecology itself. We need to cultivate complex, adaptive political systems, embracing interdependence, appreciation for diversity, and the certainty of change, turning our adversarial, antagonistic, gladiatorial politics into a space for agonistic, deliberative, creative discussion. And we need to grow it from the grassroots up, pushing through cracks in the pavement, sprouting from the trunks of rotting trees, ready to flourish as the monocultures break up and the old edifices come tumbling down.”

Embracing Universality: Contribution to GTI Forum, Universal Basic Income: Has The Time Come?  
in Great Transition Initiative

“Fundamentally, if we are to transform our society away from its extractive basis, we must sever the connection between paid labor and the capacity to survive. The clearest way to do this is through some form of UBI or social dividend. Is that the only thing we must do? Clearly not. But that severing must take place as part of the transformation.”

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# Green Agenda Went Quarterlyly

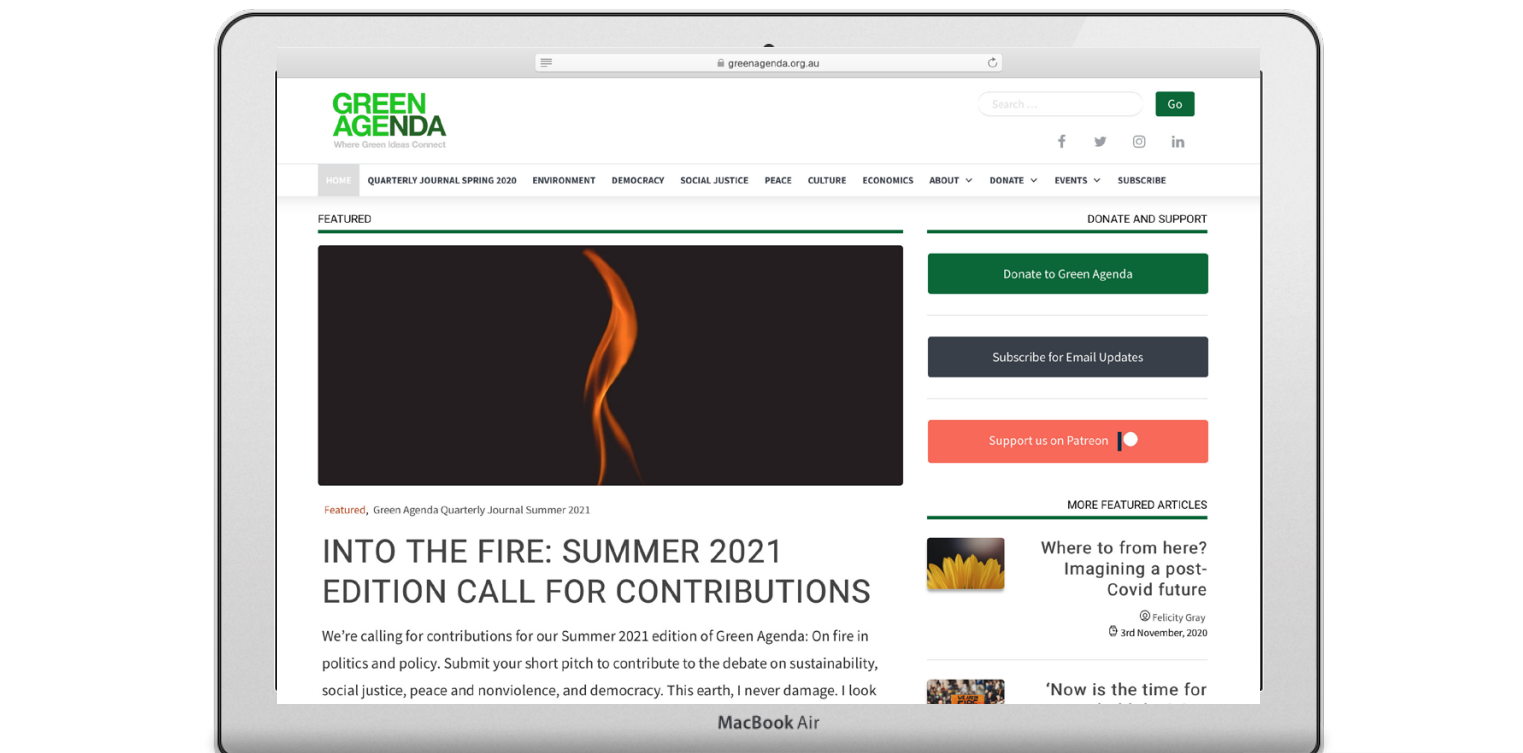
In a time of transformation, Green Agenda went quarterly! An initiative of co-editors and Simon Copland, readers and subscribers will now - each season - receive a suite of new pieces, interviews, and a webinar, unified around a curated theme. The first Spring Edition, released in November, was themed: [Where to from here? Imagining a post-COVID future.](#)

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Remaining hopeful – and channelling that hope into an alternative post-Covid future – can be a challenge. This is particularly the case when many of us are experiencing pain in our own lives, with personal loss, separation and struggle such a feature of this year. With so many of us already exhausted, Green Agenda asked: Where can we look to find hope in the dark?

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Six thought-provoking contributors [offered insights](#) into where this hope may be found.



# In the Media

While being heard above the dominant news of the day - whether it was the global pandemic or the US election - The Green Institute ended the year on a high note, with news outlets covering our commissioned UBI research.

We received grassroots media coverage:

- [A Post-Carbon World Podcast](#) with the Asia & Pacific Policy Society
- Radio interview on [‘Growing Up Through the Commons’](#) with Regenerative Hour.
- Radio interview on [‘There’s no time left not to do everything’](#) with 3CR Dirt Radio.

This year’s UBI discussions began in March within the context of the pandemic when The Green Institute joined many other community leaders and organisations to [sign an open letter to the Commonwealth Government regarding urgent implementation of a Liveable Income Guarantee](#).

December saw our UBI research [make ABC headlines](#), with the news that 58% Of Australians Support Universal Basic Income!

plus [coverage in Pedestrian](#) and [Savings](#).



It’s generally been accepted that most people probably wouldn’t approve of the idea of Universal Basic Income. The idea of unconditionally giving everyone the basics that they need to survive surely wouldn’t get very far in this context. Without a long and carefully planned campaign, people would obviously reject the idea. Wouldn’t they?

With the contribution of a few generous donors, we put it to people in a YouGov omnibus poll:

Unconditional income support is sometimes called a Guaranteed Living Wage or a Universal Basic Income. This means that just as we can rely on basic health care and education, everyone in a society has a guaranteed minimum amount of money that they can rely on. Would you support or oppose a guaranteed living wage being introduced in Australia?

The response that came back was a real surprise. 29% strongly support, a further 29% somewhat support, and only 18% oppose.

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This is an uplifting note with which to draw this very trying year to a close. Although we are still struggling with deep systemic challenges standing in our way as we try to turn around the climate crisis and spiralling economic inequality and the theft of democratic rights, more and more people are recognising both what’s happening and what needs to be done. And this year has opened a lot of eyes.

The tipping point, when it comes, will come fast.

