

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Unsustainable population growth – Smith, Ehrlich put their case in Hobart

Two of the strongest voices on the subject of further global population growth and limited resources, Australian entrepreneur Dick Smith and American environmental scientist Prof Paul Ehrlich, will present their views on a sustainable population and economy for human well-being in a lecture at the University of Tasmania on **Thursday 6 November**.

Hosted by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, Smith and Ehrlich will argue overpopulation and our growth-based economic system pose a serious threat to human wellbeing in many ways, and may be moving civilisation towards collapse.

A paper published last week in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* (PNAS) by University of Tasmania scientist, Prof Barry Brook, reflects the same argument that the planet's large, growing, and over-consuming human population, especially the increasing affluent component, is rapidly eroding many of the Earth's natural ecosystems.

"There is a dilemma that because of the demographic momentum inherent in population growth there are no easy ways to change the broad trends of human population size this century," Prof Brooks said.

Calling for a national debate on what he considers to be the most important issue facing the nation, Dick Smith says Australia's addiction to perpetual growth - population and economic - is an issue sparked by his concern for the future his grandchildren will face. He will argue that the hope for ever-growing economies in a finite world is a myth and that the world cannot continue to accelerate its use of resources and energy without dire consequences.

In 2010, he hosted the ABC TV documentary, Dick Smith's Population Puzzle - <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/populationpuzzle/>. He also established the \$1 million Wilberforce Award (<http://dicksmithpopulation.com/wilberforce-award/>) for any person under 30 who can impress him "by becoming famous through his or her ability to show leadership in communicating an alternative to our population and consumption growth-obsessed economy."

Prof Paul Ehrlich is the author of the controversial 1968 book, *The Population Bomb*, and subsequent articles including *The Population Bomb Revisited* (<http://www.populationmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Population-Bomb-Revisited-Paul-Ehrlich-20096.pdf>) written with his wife Anne Ehrlich. Ehrlich will show how

further world population growth will be a major factor in spreading death and misery through increasing climate disruption, polluting the planet, impacting – and possibly destroying – human life-support systems, and increasing the risks of vast Ebola-type epidemics and wars (possibly nuclear) over declining resources.

The lecture will be held at the Stanley Burbury Theatre from 5-6 pm. More information: <http://www.events.utas.edu.au/>

To register - <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/university-of-tasmania-6073111265>

Abstract: *Sustainable population and economy for human well-being* - **Dick Smith, Paul Erlich**

Overpopulation and our growth-based economic system pose a serious threat to human well-being in many ways, and may be moving civilisation towards collapse. Paul Erlich will show how further world population growth will be a major factor in spreading death and misery through increasing climate disruption, polluting the planet, impacting – and possibly destroying – human life-support systems, and increasing the risks of vast Ebola-type epidemics and wars (possibly nuclear) over declining resources. Dick Smith will argue that the hope for ever-growing economies in a finite world is a myth and that we cannot continue to accelerate our use of resources and energy without dire consequences. Both believe that with world population already at 7.2 billion, and expected to reach 10 billion by mid-century, we are on an unsustainable path that has potentially devastating consequences, especially for the world's poorest people. Time is rapidly running out to correct our course, yet governments everywhere are failing to respond to the immense challenges that our society faces. Paul and Dick will offer their suggestions for what needs to be done and how concerned citizens can help in moving the world towards a sustainable population and economy.

The speakers:

Dick Smith is one of Australia's most recognised individuals. After a successful business career in retailing and publishing, Dick has become well known as a restless adventurer, making many pioneering and record breaking flights by helicopter, aeroplane and balloon.

He has also been active in public service, is a passionate supporter of environmental and conservation efforts and since 1995 has been Chairman of the Australian Geographic Society. He is a supporter of many charities and individuals in need. In recognition of this he was honoured as Australian of the Year in 1986 and in 1999 received the award of Officer of the Order of Australia (AO).

Australia's addiction to perpetual growth - population and economic - is an issue of concern to him, sparked by his concern for the future his grandchildren will face. Dick is calling for a national debate on what he considers to be the most important issue facing the nation. In January 2012, Dick's work in this field was recognised by Stanford University (USA) through their appointment of Dick as Consulting Professor to the Department of Biology, School of Humanities and Sciences.

Paul Erlich is best known as the author of *The Population Bomb*, a controversial 1968 guide to the future of a world with untamed population growth and limited resources. Described as the world's most renowned population analyst, Paul has generated debate with his projections of a world struggling to feed itself as the trajectory of global population rose by the billions.

Critics point to its alarming findings. In a review of the book's findings 40 years later, Paul and wife and co-author Anne said the most serious flaw in the book was its over-optimism. But *The Bomb* was a milestone that drew attention to a host of related and very contemporary issues - climate change, pollution, water shortages, drought and military

intervention. They have subsequently written hundreds of articles updating their conclusions, among them *The Population Bomb Revisited*. An American biologist and educator, he is the Bing Professor of Population Studies in the Department of Biological Science at Stanford University and president of Stanford's Centre for Conservation Biology

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2014/10/23/1410465111.abstract>

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