

Sustainability Matters

Compiled and published by Ray Skinner, FCA

Business achieving a tomorrow for tomorrow's children



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50 years of UN Environmental Diplomacy: What's Worked and the Trends Ahead

"In 1972, acid rain was destroying trees. Birds were dying from DDT poisoning, and countries were contending with oil spills, contamination from nuclear weapons testing and the environmental harm of the Vietnam War. Air pollution was crossing borders and harming neighbouring countries.

"At Sweden's urging, the United Nations brought together representatives from countries around the world to find solutions. That summit – the U.N. Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm 50 years ago on 5-16 June, 1972 – marked the first global effort to treat the environment as a worldwide policy issue and define the core principles for its management.

"The Stockholm Conference was a turning point in how countries thought about the natural world and the resources that all nations share, like the air.

"It led to the creation of the U.N. Environment Program to monitor the state of the environment and coordinate responses to the major environmental problems. It also raised questions which continue to challenge international negotiations to this day, such as who is responsible for cleaning up environmental damage, and how much poorer countries can be expected to do.

"On the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference, let's look at where half a century of environmental diplomacy has led and the issues emerging for the coming decades.

More: <https://theconversation.com/50-years-of-un-environmental-diplomacy-whats-worked-and-the-trends-ahead-182207> plus www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/looking-back-50-years-environmental-multilateralism and www.thinkstep-anz.com/resrc/blogs/50-years-environmental-cooperation

Source: Thinkstep, 15th June 2022.

Chillin' and Killin': How Air Conditioning Has Altered Human Behaviour and the Environment

"For such tame technology, air conditioning really packs a punch when it comes to enabling environmental obscenities, indefensible infrastructure, and short-sighted settlement patterns. In the story of how A/C came to underpin human overshoot, you couldn't make up a better bad guy. Perhaps the most Batmanesque villain we've encountered would make a good candidate for mayor of Crazy Town (teaser: he's been called 'the scientist who almost destroyed the planet'). Join Asher, Rob, and Jason as they turn up the heat on air conditioning and contemplate how to stay cool in the days of heat waves, heat domes, and global heating.

More: www.postcarbon.org/crazytown/episode-60/ for the 1hr 7min podcast, plus transcript and 15 resources.

Source: Post Carbon Institute, 18th June 2022.

Offsite Innovation Construction Conference

"Offsite manufacturing in the construction sector is entering the next stage in its exciting development.

When /Where: 23rd June, Wellington

More: www.colaboffsitez.com

Source: NZGBC, 15th June 2022.

20th Sustainable Business Awards

"Ready to be recognised for your awesome mahi? Entries are now open for the 2022 Sustainable Business Awards. This is your chance to celebrate your sustainability achievements! It's the 20th year of the Awards and we're going to make them extra special!

"Entries are super easy and don't take too much time. The Awards are open to everyone – big and small businesses, government agencies, not for profits and individuals – and are free to enter.

"Finalists and winners get heaps of promotion, which is great for your business. So, if you have a sustainability story to tell, now's the time to share it. And if you know of a person or business doing awesome work, why not submit a nomination for them?

"You can enter in any of nine categories on topics ranging from climate, communication and collaboration to food, nature, social impact and circular economy. There are also awards for individuals.

"They are free to enter and open to anyone in New Zealand - individuals, organisations and partnerships.

Launch Event: Tues 12th July 2022, 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Entries Close: 24th July 2022.

More: <https://sustainable.org.nz/sustainable-business-awards> and <https://events.humanitix.com/launch-2022-sustainable-business-awards>

Source: SBN, 21st June 2022.

Editor: A substantial accomplishment by Rachel and team.

Climate Change & Business Conference: Now to Net Zero

"The Environmental Defence Society, Sustainable Business Council and Climate Leaders Coalition are partnering for the first time to kick energy and direction into the transformation that's needed. We're at a historic moment for climate and business. By the end of May 2022, the Government will announce its first Emissions Reduction Plan and in November the UNFCCC will hold COP27. The urgency to accelerate change is strengthening.

"This year's conference will focus on the central role of the business sector in transforming Aotearoa. It will provide a platform for leaders to share fresh ideas about how they are executing strategies to build resilience and deliver on our collective ambition.

"We must step-up action now to reach net zero. Join us to hear how business is leading and what practical actions you can take to advance momentum.

When/Where: 19th –22nd Sept 2022. Auckland

More: <https://tcc.eventsair.com/ccbc/registration-2022>

Source: CCBC, 17th June 2022.

If you would like to support the production of *Sustainability Matters*

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Make sure you provide your name!

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Climate Summit Ends in 'Unconscionable' Failure as Rich Nations Turn Backs on Poorest

"As international delegates left Germany Friday [17th June] following the Bonn Climate Change Conference, climate campaigners called the talks, which lasted 10 days this month, an 'utter failure' for neglecting to establish plans to support the Global South in adapting to the planetary crisis – months after developing countries demanded aid at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Scotland.

"It is unconscionable developed countries continue to kick the issue of financing for loss and damage down the road – first COP26, now Bonn', said Jeni Miller, executive director of the Global Climate and Health Alliance, referring to the impacts of the climate crisis which developing nations have already suffered and demanding that the issue get badly-needed attention at upcoming talks.

"Such financing would enable countries to deal with the impacts on their people's lives and livelihoods, homes and health systems, and must be a core component of the COP27 agenda', Miller added

"Deepening campaigners' anger was the fact European countries present at the Bonn conference are currently boosting fossil fuel imports to replace the gas shipments they previously received from Russia, which were largely discontinued after Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine earlier this year.

"The E.U. completely misses the point of what it is to be a climate leader', said Chiara Martinelli, director of Climate Action Network Europe. 'European countries also urgently need to massively ramp up their climate and energy targets, rather than displace oil and gas from Russia with those from developing countries, further locking them into fossil fuels. That's what climate leaders should do.'

"Focusing on sourcing new fossil fuels from overseas while 'consistently' blocking discussions about loss and damage financing in Bonn 'exposed [the E.U.'s] hypocritical stance', said Harjeet Singh, the group's senior climate impacts advisor. ...

More: www.commondreams.org/news/2022/06/17/climate-summit-ends-unconscionable-failure-rich-nations-turn-backs-poorest

Source: OD Action News, 19th June 2022.

Losing Our Cool: Uncomfortable Truths about Our Air-Conditioned World (and Finding New Ways to Get Through the Summer)

"Losing our Cool shows how indoor climate control is colliding with an out-of-control outdoor climate. In America, energy consumed by home air-conditioning, and the resulting greenhouse emissions, have doubled in just over a decade, and energy to cool retail stores has risen by two-thirds. Now the entire affluent world is adopting the technology. As the biggest economic crisis in eighty years rolls across the globe, financial concerns threaten to shove ecological crises into the background.

"While the book proves the planet's atmosphere cannot sustain even our current use of air-conditioning, it also makes a much more positive argument which loosening our attachment to refrigerated air could bring benefits to humans and the planet that go well beyond averting a climate crisis. Though it saves lives in heat waves, air-conditioning may also be altering our bodies' sensitivity to heat; our rates of infection, allergy, asthma, and obesity; and even our sex drive.

More: www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/7865235-losing-our-cool 255pages, published 2010

Source: Post Carbon Institute, 18th June 2022.

Is Less Plastic Always Better for the Environment?

"For years, eco-conscious consumers have been calling for manufacturers to ditch single-use plastic packaging and replace it with environmentally friendly alternatives.

"When Toby Green bought Wellington-based dip manufacturer Elysian Foods in 2017, one of the first things he wanted to do was reduce the amount of plastic waste the company was dumping on the world. He extensively researched which alternatives there were for his dips, only to discover ditching plastic wasn't quite as clear-cut as he had imagined.

"We don't normally write stories from the perspective of manufacturers, but following the journey of a small business trying to do the right thing by both its customers and Mother Earth piqued our interest. And what we uncovered raised a question we never thought we'd be asking: Is less plastic really better for the environment? The answer seems obvious. Plastic = bad ... right? Well, turns out it's just not that simple. [A lengthy in-depth, non-technical article.]

More: www.consumer.org.nz/articles/is-less-plastic-always-better-for-the-environment

Source: Consumer, 18th June 2022.

saveBOARD Packaging Waste to Construction Board Plant Officially Opens

"The Te Rapa factory of New Zealand company saveBOARD, which converts packaging waste into environmentally sustainable construction boards, was officially opened today [14th June]....

"Mayor Southgate said she was delighted Hamilton had been chosen as the base for an innovative technology which addressed both an environmental issue by reducing waste to landfill and a building supply issue by turning that waste into a certified, safe and low carbon construction board.

"Dr Sharma said by producing building materials in New Zealand the saveBOARD plant would improve supply chain resilience while providing local employment and helping to reduce carbon emissions.

"saveBOARD Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Paul Charteris said the factory started producing saleable product on 21st November 2021 and since 10th January it has been operating 24 hours a day, three days a week producing 400 boards a day diverting up to 4,000 tonnes of waste from landfill annually. The company plans to ramp the factory up to six days/week as demand increases.

"Mr Charteris said New Zealand builders can now replace plywood, particle board and plaster board, with saveBOARD's low carbon, environmentally sustainable construction boards made from packaging waste such as used beverage cartons, soft plastics and coffee cups.

More: www.scoop.co.nz/stories/BU2206/S00224/saveboard-packaging-waste-to-construction-board-plant-officially-opens-in-te-rapa.htm plus <https://archipro.co.nz/professional/saveboard>

Source: Tim Marshall, Wright Communications, 14th June.

New Efforts to Counter Illegal Timber Trade

"New Zealand is committing to trade only in legally harvested timber with the Forests (Legal Harvest Assurance) Amendment Bill introduced to Parliament 18th May." Under the Bill, timber harvested in New Zealand and overseas, and used in products made here or imported, will have to be verified as being legally harvested. ...

More: <https://petition.act.greenpeace.org.nz/forests-deforestation-free-law> plus www.forest-trends.org/fptf-idat-home-2/ and www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-efforts-counter-illegal-timber-trade

Source: Greenpeace, 21st June 2022.

CarbonEES Rounds-up More Excellent Material

"We start this week with a couple of impactful comments from the UN Chief. First, that fossil fuels are a dead end, and subsidies of these are a scandal. He also comments to the young that they should be thinking seriously about the environmental conscience of businesses they are considering working for. Two very big statements that would not have been made in the not so distant past – the mindset out there is changing.

"With a social outlook aspect to our newsletter this week, we look at how top scientists keep an optimistic viewpoint, and then at how Jo(e) average could try understanding the human ability to wipe species out, and how this could be minimised by eating more pests. The increased prevalence of carbon footprint info on product labels helps us all become more aware and buy greener. And behaviour of populations with low water supplies is changing – maybe you don't need a precisely manicured lawn, some native vegetation may survive better and look just as stunning in its own way, as some California residents have found. Their governing bodies are pleased with the way peoples' mindsets are changing so water use is being considered.

"In the UK there is a lot of awareness in communities around how to improve the natural areas they have, and many solutions are being implemented. But in Scotland, rewilding has rapidly become a solution, but not without its problems. Is this the best way to get nature back on track? And palm oil is also a fantastic product in many ways, but maybe not so much if it uses land that is better used, or kept, for other less destructive ventures?

"We end with a very in-depth article from *Stuff* this last weekend around the Lake Onslow proposition – a massive water battery that could solve New Zealand's energy requirements... but at what cost? Now read the articles.

More: www.carbonees.com/single-post/snippets-for-9-june-2022

Source: ... *SnippETS*, 9th June 2022. 

Shareholder Community

"Our [ACCR] shareholder community is made up of hundreds of passionate shareholders, who hold shares in a variety of companies. This allows us, at ACCR, to be ready to file resolutions with multiple companies across the ASX, as needed, and it gives our ACCR team the ability to engage with large companies and investors.

"We make it easy to participate and have recently redesigned our shareholder hub – allowing shareholders to register with us and update holdings in just a few minutes. You can check out the hub (and sign up) here: <https://hub.accr.org.au/>

"Rosi, part of our shareholder community, said this about the new systems: 'A big thank you for designing a quick, clear, easy way of signing up and adding shares and shareholding entities. In the current climate of often time-wasting, frustrating technologies, I congratulate you.'

"We've also recently updated our agency agreement. Our agency agreement is the agreement shareholders make with ACCR to come together with us to prepare and put resolutions to companies in the lead up to AGMs. We are really happy to see almost 70% of our community have signed the new agreement. If you have not, please do, we need you!*

"Shareholders are critical to all of our work and we are always looking for more people who hold shares and want to join with us. Spread the word by sharing the hub with others.

*If you are connected to us via a financial advisor who does this work for you – your agreement and holdings will be updated by them.

More: <https://hub.accr.org.au/>

Source: ACCR, 11th June 2022. 

New Zealand Electro Mobility Summit

"The New Zealand Electro Mobility Summit will explore the growing role of EVs, e-mobility and other lower emissions fuel technologies in supporting the delivery of transport, logistics and fleet decarbonisation. The summit will examine recent and upcoming government policies such as the Clean Car Discount, new vehicles coming into Aotearoa and how our behaviour must adapt if we are going to get the most out of electric vehicles.

When/Where: 11th – 12th August, Auckland

More: www.brightstar.co.nz/events/new-zealand-electro-mobility-summit

Source: Brightstar snail mail early June 2022

Editor: Includes some discussion about use of hydrogen. 

The Age of Acceleration

"Humans have long shaped the state of the planet. The question is: are we hurtling toward an ecological future that's completely new?

"Wherever you train your attention for long enough, boundaries dissolve. And yet, if we define, as Earth systems scientists do, geological eras as stretches of time whose material markers trace through lake sediment and rock, then perhaps we can use these boundaries to help us make meaning of the mess we're in.

"Stratigraphic signs point to a recent shift from a relatively stable planetary state (the Holocene) to one marked by increasing and accelerating instability (the Anthropocene), starting around 1950. Around this hinge point, there was a surge in both human and Earth systems indicators, from human population and financialisation to levels of greenhouse gases and radionuclides. As Will Steffen and others have shown, toward the end of the century these indicators sharply accelerate: Atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane. Real GDP, urban population, foreign direct investment, water use, energy use, telecommunications, and international tourism. Surface temperature, ocean acidification, marine fish capture, shrimp aquaculture, terrestrial biosphere degradation, tropical forest loss. To peruse the catalogue of graphs spiking skyward is sobering. Because it's not just how much, but how fast. Known as the Great Acceleration, the staggering rates of change are almost unprecedented.

"A key question of the Anthropocene is one of degree versus kind. Are humans doing as we have always done – changing and being changed by our environment(s) – or is this terrifying acceleration something new? Humans and our systems have always shaped and been shaped by the environment, and large-scale impacts of human activities began earlier than many people might suspect. Long before fossil fuel capitalism, the seafaring Polynesians who settled New Zealand brought with them agricultural land-burning practices that which led to deforestation and created soot which spread widely across the Southern Hemisphere, altering the atmosphere and perhaps fertilising the nutrient-limited Southern Ocean. Three centuries later,

More: <https://orionmagazine.org/article/age-of-acceleration-climate-change-essay/>

Source: *Orion*, 10th June 2022.

Editor: Interesting the reference to NZ and the perceived impact of what occurred there around 1200AD. 

The Case of the Vanishing Cafeteria Tray

Cafeteria food trays are going out of use, reducing food purchased, food waste and washing/cleaning costs and eliminating cost of purchasing the trays. [Needed for disabled.]

More: <https://reasonstobecheerful.world/trayless-dining-university-food-waste-solution/>

Source: *Reasons to be Cheerful*, 15th June 2022

Editor: Can be used as works of art – see pic. 

Sustainable Business Management

“By Brigitte de Graaff, CMA, CSCA

“Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues aren't new, but the amount of attention being devoted to the topic has increased significantly, compelling companies to adjust accordingly. Not only must companies work to fulfill reporting requirements (and plan for future requirements), but it's critical they ensure their strategies, processes, and operations remain relevant in this rapidly changing environment.

“The regulatory field, in particular, is evolving quickly regarding sustainability. Governments and regulators are increasingly requiring companies to report externally in a broader manner in which multiple stakeholders' perspectives and the long-term value-creation capabilities of the companies play a central role. This has led to a global growth in institutions, standards, and requirements focusing on how companies should report about ESG issues.

“It can be rather confusing for companies [entities?] to tackle ESG issues internally while at the same time keeping track of the alphabet soup of organisations and frameworks which need attention. (See Table 1 for an overview of just a handful of the abbreviations in sustainable business management.) It's an ever-growing challenge, but the increased interest in sustainability and ESG-related reporting also provides companies an opportunity to reassess their value-creating capabilities for a variety of stakeholders. Through sustainable business management, companies can look to integrate sustainability and ESG efforts into their strategies and processes to create greater value in both the short and long term.

“The opportunities are ample, from including ESG factors in pricing decisions to adjusting the decision-making process in such a way ESG factors are made relevant for the whole supply chain to ensuring long-term environmental risks are at the core of strategic decision making. Rarely has the profession been in the position to play such a key role in a whirlwind of changes to society. Sustainability is the future of finance, and finance is the future of sustainability. These are challenging but exciting times to be a finance and accounting leader.

More: <https://sfmagazine.com/post-entry/april-2022-sustainable-business-management/>

Source: Chartered Accountants Library, 14th June. 

Editor: An excellent article. Like many others it may overlook simple things which CA's can influence such as building insulation, green leases, compressed air systems, refrigeration systems, white roofs, roadside swales, porous paving, purchasing vehicles fit for purpose rather than to impress, hiring personnel who live close to the premises, reducing staff turnover, 'design and build to last' and much more – really simple stuff.

The Evolution of Sustainability Disclosure: Comparing the 2022 SEC, ESRS, and ISSB Proposals

“Three major sustainability disclosure proposals were released in March and April 2022. They come at a pivotal time in corporate disclosure.

The focus is on the profiles of three proposals.

“Key takeaways include:

More: www.sustainability.com/thinking/the-evolution-of-sustainability-disclosure-comparing-the-sec-esrs-issb-proposals/ 27pages, 3.27Mb

Source: The Sustainability Institute, 17th June 2022

Editor: Listed entities [companies] are the focus. As a result a huge swath of other entities are omitted. 

World's First e-tug Welcomed at Ports of Auckland

“The world's first full sized ship-handling electric tug, named *Sparky*, has arrived at the Ports of Auckland. last Tuesday 7th June] escorted by Ports of Auckland's current tugs and pilot boats. ...

“*Sparky* is the first e-tug of its type in the world and was a truly innovative project for us. Her arrival marks a big step towards the ports' decarbonisation of operations and towards our long-term emissions reduction goals', he says. ...

“The Damen RSD-E Tug 2513 has a 70 tonne bollard pull, the same as the port's strongest diesel tug Hauraki, also built by Damen.

“It features 80 battery racks holding 2,240 batteries, totalling 2,784 kWh of power. The e-tug is expected to do up to four shipping moves on a charge of batteries. Recharge time is approximately two hours.

“Sparky is anticipated to save around 465 tonnes of CO2 in diesel emissions annually.

“To ensure safety, it also has two 1,000kW back-up generator sets which will only be used in cases of emergency or some fault which is not part of business as usual.

More: <https://transporttalk.co.nz/news/ports-of-auckland-welcomes-worlds-first-e-tug>

Source: *SBC Weekly Pānui*, 9th June 2022. 

The Age of Stolen Salt

“Salt is time. Evidence of how long since evaporation. Resident time of water in basins. Measured future for the preserved dead. Salt is first and lasting.

“We live in the age of stolen salt, bottled sweat, preserved expendable flesh.

“Some historians say salt grew up with capitalism. Or the preconditions of capitalism. Agricultural societies with domesticated animals disconnected by the wild symbiosis of salt had to actively seek out salt: thus trade, thus war, thus tax, thus all forms of distance and extraction. Going back to 'the salt mines' has become a euphemism for extractive labour in general. But the violence is not only metaphorical.

“Once upon a time, salt itself was money. Precious rock salt good as gold. They say the first salt war was about 6000 BCE at Yuncheng Lake in China. All the wood it takes to evaporate brine is partially blamed for significant deforestation in Europe. The European colonisers of the Caribbean stacked salt in their basements. Traded salt for human beings in chains.

More: <https://orionmagazine.org/article/the-age-of-stolen-salt>

Source: Orion, 17th June 2022. 

Pollen and Heat: A Looming Challenge for Global Agriculture

“Science writer Carolyn Beans reports on a new phenomenon being observed by scientists and farmers: unusually high springtime temperatures are killing pollen and interfering with the fertilisation of crops. This is leading to diminished harvests of various crops, including corn, canola, peanuts, and rice. Looking to a warmer future, researchers are now searching for ways to help pollen beat the heat, uncovering genes that could lead to more heat-tolerant plants and breeding varieties that can survive the winter and flower before the heat strikes. 'We're going to have to deal with [climate change] if we're going to be able to continue to feed people', a farmer tells Beans.

More: <https://e360.yale.edu/features/pollen-and-heat-a-looming-challenge-for-global-agriculture>

Source: *Yale Environment 360*, 17th June 2022. 