



Fiona Wain Oration

By Maria Atkinson AM, Sydney, 29 May 2017

I want to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation the indigenous owners of this land and the oldest continuing culture in human history. I acknowledge any representative from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community – including the elders and emerging leaders. I hope you can soon walk in two worlds where your culture is recognised as the gift it is to this country. This area is rich in indigenous heritage and culture. We can never forget their past mistreatment. But, we can celebrate our local aboriginal heritage and empower and facilitate indigenous connections to enterprise and opportunities.

Some of us are lucky to have known Fiona Wain - she brought incredible courage to her environmental advocacy. Fiona was strong and had a healthy dose of sensitivity and empathy. She was great to be around. When you are around Fiona you felt welcome, she shared her ideas, networks, fears and plans. She is a special kind of person that we miss. It is a privilege to speak at the annual event which remembers her and all she did. Fiona said a little more than 10 years ago that *“Sustainability is the biggest opportunity for wealth generation and maintenance that business has ever been presented with”*. And as I explore today’s theme ‘SDGs and the City’ I want to talk more about acting powerfully and courageously. And in doing so let me first talk about the rationale for establishing a platform to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

It’s clear to me that you care – that’s why you are here. In your life, I am certain you have known opportunities to inspire, create and take action. You have lead change because you cared to see the change. Leadership takes courage – it is personal! The question is often asked, are leaders born or learned? I think we are all leaders – our lives are filled with leadership opportunities – any given day presents at least one opportunity to lead.

George Lakoff the cognitive scientist and amazing author said that *“Caring is taking responsibility, acting powerfully and courageously. You have to be strong to care, and to act on that care with success. Our economy improves when our people are better educated and healthier, when our air is clean, when our environment is greener, when people are paid what their work is worth to us all, and above all when there is trust.”* We can all do something to bring about positive change. In order to get the majority of society to act on social responsibility, Lakoff’s advice is that *“We need to embrace a deep rationality that can take account of, and advantage of, a mind that is largely unconscious.”* To tap into that *“largely unconscious”* mind, Lakoff reminds us that *“Words are not mere words”*. He says, *“The more often we hear the words, the stronger that circuitry gets, until the frames become embedded in our thinking. The more we repeat the language of social responsibility, the more those ideas come to dominate the public conversation. In turn, the character of public discourse determines what the news media promote and criticize, and what the candidates for public office must pay attention to”*.

Practitioners of Buddhism have described true leadership as “*living with balance*” - where everyone can bring their essence to being. Others espouse ‘*Energetic Leadership*’ where a win-lose dynamic is superseded by win-win and can go even further to ‘*we all win or we all lose*’ which can be transformational leadership.

So, here’s a New Business Model – where we all win or we all lose. It is called ‘*Sustainability*’. This new operational model it is healthy, inclusive, cohesive, diverse and productive over time. Sustainability is the new economy, and the new economy is sustainable. We need to take our traditional business thinking that has been handed down to us – revisit it and reinvent it. The old narrow view of capitalism – where a business only contributes to society by making a profit, is just plain wrong. No company or organisation, or individual is self-contained. The success of every organisation is affected by the supporting organisations and infrastructure around it. Sustainability is complex - environmental social and financial impacts, interactions – it is a system and it requires systems thinking – just like good economic policy making.

Sustainability represents the consideration of the complex interconnections that exist between finance, the environment and society. It’s not a balancing act or an exercise of weighing one impact against the other. It is the ethics of recognising the interdependence of these three categories and then acting, having been informed of the impacts and working to ensure a positive impact. Re-conceiving the intersection between society and organisation performance requires leaders and managers in across government, the community and business to develop new skills and knowledge and quite frankly invent new ways of working together. Roy Green, the Dean of the University of Technology Sydney has said, “*Australia needs a management skills upgrade. The business world of the future is ours to shape – a compelling opportunity but also a great responsibility*”.

We are in a new era. For-profit businesses are tackling social and environmental issues, charities are developing sustainable business models, and governments are forging market-based solutions for the delivery of services. A different model of economy is emerging. As for-benefit organisations - businesses and governments continue to prove that they can balance financial, social, and environmental performance, demand will grow. Caring is demonstrated through leadership and change is needed and you have the ability to transform Australia. Because innovation is an economic act that relies on new perceptions of market opportunity.

Opportunities come from constraints. Here are some of the constraints facing cities. They are dynamic spaces that respond to evolving circumstances. Cities face complex and rapidly evolving challenges: governance demands, climate change, global migration flows, financial volatility, pollution, expanding social inequalities.

Some facts:

- Half of humanity – 3.5 billion people – lives in cities today
- By 2030, almost 60% of the world’s population will live in urban areas
- The world’s cities occupy just 3% of the Earth’s land, but account for the majority of energy consumption and ¾ of our carbon emissions
- Urbanization puts pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health.
- However, the high density of cities can bring efficiency gains and technological innovation while reducing resource and energy consumption

In addition to being a sustainability strategist, I am also the Central District Commissioner for the NSW Government's Greater Sydney Commission. So I'll add some facts for the area we are in today.

- Sydney's current population growth represents about one-quarter of Australia's total growth (24%). Or put another way, almost 1 in every 4 new Australians moves to, or is born in Sydney. The forecast growth in population by demographers working in government is that the population is set to grow to 8 million by 2056.
- Since the year 2000, 69% of Greater Sydney's Growth has been natural increase – babies being born and people living longer.
- Over the next 20 years, 60% of growth will come from natural increase and 40% from net migration.
- Greater Sydney will develop into 3 cities as the population continues to grow westward with Parramatta becoming the new Central City and a new city forming around Western Sydney Airport.
- Although economically very successful – this comes with a myriad of issues.

While the Eastern City of Sydney has a surplus of jobs, as like all great cities it is a magnet-like attractor of human capital and skilled workers. However, it is facing a number of constraints and limitations including traffic congestion, transport network capacity, curfews at Kingsford Smith Airport, residential encroachment on freight routes and industrial and urban services lands, low housing affordability, a shortage of parkland and sport and recreation areas, not enough schools and even a shortage of office space. The Eastern City is also not centrally located. There are poor east west connections, not enough and certainly joined up walking and cycling routes. There isn't much of a street planting strategy to provide a beautiful urban canopy that also reduces the heat island effect. The list goes on. And by 2036 over 50% of Sydney's population will live west of Parramatta. If we don't plan well and make the transformational changes needed there will be a loss of liveability amenity and environmental health. These issues are real and they affect every one of us in the room – you directly, your family, your colleagues, and most certainly the next few generations.

So let's stop eyeing the competitor – whether that is a business or another city. Instead, let's make the opportunity pie bigger. For those of us from Sydney start by asking what do we need to do to we equip Australia's international city for a century of prosperity. Let's imagine we have the whole ecosystem in this room - business, not-for-profit, academia and government all represented here – let's assume we've got everybody needed to do whatever we need to do.

I always like to ask questions like 'what do we as a group need to do'? This appeals to my delusional megalomaniac and benevolent dictatorship personality tendencies. Very often people see their daily work is trying to get some advantage – some gain from someone in an adjacent business. A builder trying to screw some money from the product supplier, the consultant trying to get more money from the local Council - always looking to see who's lunch we can take. To me we always seem to be fighting – scrapping - over the crumbs so to speak. If however, you come at it from my megalomaniac point of view, there is no point asking 'who's lunch can I steal? Because it is all my lunch! Ask instead 'How can I make the pie bigger and how does growing the pie for all, really mean FOR ALL ?' .

Changing the relationship to sustainability – to the environmental, financial and social objectives to a win-win model or better still to a we all win or we all lose model is going to make the pie bigger. So that you're still with me – let's trigger something from childhood. Benefits come from going from a mind-set of being forced to do something – like being told you have to 'eat our greens' - you may have fed them to the dog, hidden them in your palm and flushed them down the toilet when no one was watching. Benefits come from choosing to do something that has positive impacts. It's fair to say that over the last few years' salads have transformed from something lame that we used to eat as a punishment, into something exciting, fresh and delicious. We have come a long way from a limp

Caesar Salad - the token option on menus, thanks to chefs like Ottolenghi. Today, we have greens presented with beauty, health, taste, texture and they delight. People decided to change the 'greens' option – that's what it took and now they are priced right next to main menu meat options.

Please don't just sit there seeing things with just your own professional piece of the pie lens. You're not just a product importer or just a technology supplier, or in retail or agriculture – because behind you is a researcher – behind her is your local government specialist and to his left is the industry association representative all trying to support everyone's success. Collaboration is the opportunity to transform the entire Australian future sustainable economy.

The resourceful CEO's of tomorrow are not focused on themselves and the immediate – instead they are focused on the community in all its forms – local, business, country, planet. I am here to tell you the secret sauce of sustainability is collaboration – but you have to do and be the real thing – the market is awash with new types of capital directed at sustainable outcomes and to get that you have to be authentic – and submit to monitoring standards and environmental or social outcomes. Equally communities are also demanding transparency and verification reporting of outcomes. In other words, you can't spit your green's out because I'm pretty sure Mum and Dad will find out.

Let's flip the tables for a minute and look at the world from the money people – from their point of view. They have a tranche of investors who have specifically labelled money they want to give if the 'project' speaks to a sustainability audience. That's where the money is coming from. It's coming from your 21-year-old daughter and 30-year-old cousin and your mother-in-law – it is coming from the people who want to guarantee a planet for the future. These are the people who are looking at the world differently – they are the ones going on the marches and wanting to see that social impact and economy are linked. They are using their pension schemes – their superannuation funds to impact change. There is a lot of money labelled for sustainability purposes.

But remember, the success of every organisation is impacted and dependant by the enabling inorganic and organic infrastructure around it. Nothing works (not even business) in a vacuum. Be part of something bigger – always look to embrace widening your influence and partnerships. Just look at the Australian Business and Biodiversity Initiative as a recent example of where collaboration between governments, business and community meant that they didn't circle the wagons and shoot inwards! And even the establishment by our national government of a Cities Ministerial portfolio should be applauded, promoted and then questioned as to why it can't be even more ambitious in its purpose.

OK, so rightly you're thinking 'Collaborate and come together to do what?' Well I want you to collaborate to find new ways of working together. The majority of us want to be with people who share our values – the sustainable model is full of cross cultures, age and all aspects of diversity but with the same values. As leaders, you need to facilitate human beings, whose values align with positive impact and sustainable outcomes, bringing ideas to combine and recombine and to meet, and to mate. Because when we exchange ideas it equals 2 ideas, these ideas have sex and we have more ideas -don't ask how.

Feel empowered by this as well as fearful. Kodak bankruptcy in 2012 is said to be from the impact of 28 employees starting Instagram. Instagram was founded in 2010 and in 2012 it was sold to Facebook for over \$1 billion. Today there is no need to pay a real estate agent fee. There are APP's that register the potential seller and match the interested parties. There is no need to pay for hotel upselling – you can have food delivered from the best local restaurants, even have transferrable gym rights. And with Airbnb there's even no reason to stay in a hotel. These are models of collaboration.

What we need is enabling decentralised decision-making and risk taking. Ideas happen when people connect and share - chance favours the connected.

Trust me **THE** essential ingredient for the secret sauce of sustainability is “collaboration by all, for the mutual benefit of all”. Such collaboration must transform the Australian political, economic, environmental and societal landscape if the sustainable development agenda is ever to have a role and relevance. I think the Sustainable Development Goals could be the vehicle for transformative collaboration.

The Sustainable Development Goals are officially known as ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. They have a set of 17 Global Goals with 169 targets between them. Key amongst them is Sustainable Development Goal No 11 - make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

I’d like to suggest some innovative ideas for Australia’s transformational change:

- By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management.

We can learn from the EU, whose ministers responsible for urban policy recently adopted the *Pact of Amsterdam*; which aims to improve co-operation between member states, cities, and the EU to strengthen the ‘urban dimension’ in EU decision-making. The initial work will focus on housing, air quality, integration of migrants and refugees, and urban poverty. With transparency - knowledge spreads instantaneously and success in the new economy depends on sharing. A contemporary example is Tesla releasing their patents. Let’s make warehouse databases and libraries available to the whole industry. Let’s move to Open Source Data The crucial steps are to manage the process, make it easy for data including from government agencies to get into libraries and warehouses. The foundation is that environmental and social good must come from the process and be a measurable result. We need to be more philanthropic with our data.

- Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning

Urbanisation drives economic growth. That’s according to the [London School of Economics and Political Science](#)’s recent Business Review. For example, there is a strong and positive association between urban size and human capital. The key point here is that being surrounded by smart people makes each individual smarter and more productive due to positive knowledge spill-overs. This magic-like phenomenon is not restricted to formal education but also other more informal forms of knowledge and idea sharing, which in turn have been shown to stimulate creativity and innovation. This is also why knowledge-based and innovation-driven industries tend to be clustered.

So, why be half hearted in the development of one of our greatest economic assets – Our Cities! Let’s promote greater spatial concentration of activities in cities, and if so, design policies in order to maximise the positive effects, and minimise the negative effects measuring outcomes. Whether it is for fresh food or online product delivery, let’s join up our supply chains. PwC estimates around 45% of current work processes can be automated. The world’s biggest brewing companies used an autonomous vehicle to haul finished goods point to point. DHL suggests autonomous driving will lower freight costs by 40%. We have trialled driverless cars in Adelaide and our mining industry uses autonomous trucks. Target Corp – pick and pack robots with artificial intelligence computing power work longer, quicker and at lower costs. Robots will soon pick orders from shelves, the floor and totally switch manual to automated distribution centres.

The Sydney system which is congested and expensive needs us to move to a co-op model for freight and logistics efficiency and come together to de-risk the ever-changing technological innovations. Today in the US companies needing short-term warehouse space can connect with other businesses with floor or rack space through an APP – but not in Oz.

The future of retail isn't just 'shops' – it's people like me who have a store on eBay and distribute clothing every week. When nearly 40% of online sales are lost because of cost of shipping. Uber style last minute freight services – metro riding, walking, cycling etc. are emerging using crowd-sourcing APP's. Today you can also find space for packages on a truck using a crowd-sourced freight service combining software and service and bespoke last-mile fulfilment service providers and Amazon trialed its Prime Air Drone – Neither if these are available in Australia. Let's create sustainable and joined up distribution.

- By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services. Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Build sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.

We need to come together for a new model of housing and apartment design, construction, financing and operating - one that moves to a model of sharing and where we sleep in the home and live in the public domain. In 2020 entire buildings will be constructed from 3D printing models - room scale buildings using these printers are being constructed today. A robot today in Western Australia is capable of erecting a brick home within the space of just 2 days, as compared to the 6 weeks it would take human labourers - without ever needing to stop for coffee breaks. A joined up modular supply chain could revolutionise this city's critical need. We need to create new shared spaces – multipurpose facilities and share them. Large scale retail should have sport and recreation facilities on their roof, night clubs can be in basements, schools should be open – for after school care, for educational learning, for locals to play in ... new models of collaborative sharing are needed – even in the insurance sector!

- By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

Seriously, we don't have precinct solutions for waste – we don't put feed stock from waste near the customer. A C&D waste contractor isn't next to a concrete batching plant needing the aggregate, or landscaping which needs the dirt and organic input. Instead the city has 6,000 customers all procuring service from 35 customers and is prevented from collecting commercial and municipal waste – it like most councils in the Central District send the waste on trucks or train a long way away from the city. Time to get joined up and include waste to energy innovation for the landfill waste.

- By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters. Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

According to the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, Australia's building sector can deliver a third of Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target, save \$20 billion and create healthier, more productive cities if a suite of targeted policies are introduced. The [City of Sydney](#) has recently announced it has stepped up action on climate, and aims for 50% renewables by 2030.

How to do it? Well, we can wait for the reform of the energy market to support local electricity generation – or you can join a Blockchain solution. Let's explore ways for consumers to trade their own energy to make renewables more affordable. New technologies and mechanisms that allow consumers and business to trade their own renewable energy with each other and with network companies. Ultimately getting the most value out of solar and battery systems through a more flexible and modern marketplace. We can't wait for appropriate water pricing by IPART to support the viability of recycled water schemes and to encourage water efficiency; resilience - embellishment of our pocket and local parks. We need to set efficient and low carbon zones and the money needs to lend to allow new infrastructure for efficient production and use of resources. The Artificial Intelligence - self-driving car industry and robotics will see robots teaching robots. The Western Sydney Airport is being designed for robotics, smart freight & logistics and autonomous vehicles – it needs to be planned as a joined-up ecosystem. Tradesmen and women will be coding robots. The use of robots to complement traditional customer service roles is a growing trend in airports. Robotics was listed among 2017's top seven tech trends for airlines and airports – yet we haven't got an automated centralised air to rail strategy for Sydney's current gateway port or airport. And I haven't even begun to scratch the surface of how our communities, whether urban, suburban, rural, regional or remote, including those of our nation's first peoples, can be enlivened by the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. Andrew, that's perhaps for another Oration.

Let's come together to collaborate with a kind of MOU. We know that when we work together we can be even smarter and more inventive capable than when we work alone. We live in a world where technology has enabled us to share what we know, what we like and it has changed the way we connect, communicate and work together. We commit to listening, speaking, giving and to working together to be inventive and progressive, and from this we know we will get to win-win. We will share and collaborate because we believe in the network effect and that everyone has something of value to contribute. And when we do this something of significant benefit will result.

We recognise that sustainability is a moving target and we are committed to change, including transformation of our own organisations. We understand the limits of the current linear take – make - dispose economy; we want to lead the transformation to a circular economy, which optimises management of materials and resources flows, and changes our modes of production and consumption. In working towards the next chapter of the new economy transformation, we particularly want to accelerate the law of diffusion of innovation across our products and services, our freight and logistics, our infrastructure and share more. This kind of leadership demands courage and creativity and just like Fiona Wain we will work together to achieve innovation – is not the idea, it is the team!

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