



# Commission for The Human Future

**A new Australian body committed to a flourishing human future.**

Human activity has transformed the world as we know it. Wildfires, floods, droughts, melting ice caps, large-scale extinctions in both the animal and plant kingdoms, shortages of water, loss of soil, forest and sea life, combined with rising food insecurity and pandemic disease are raising awareness across all societies that our very way of life is at risk.

Our complex society has evolved in ways that mean the failure of any of the vital systems which make our world function – such as food, energy, water, clean air, a healthy environment – could quickly lead to the collapse of human society itself, as many authoritative voices are warning. Some of these catastrophic risks could be upon us much faster even than climate change – and they will impact the entire global community. Australia is not prepared, as a society, to fully grasp and deal with any of these risks, let alone their combination. Nor are we prepared to capture the many, great benefits that will flow from solving them.

The **Commission for the Human Future** has been established by a group of concerned Australians, who have been prompted by the need to alert Australians to the nature and complexity of the very serious risks now facing human society and to assist in the development and application of solutions to them. It will help to identify fresh opportunities arising out of the solution of these threats. and will serve as a knowledge hub for the national response to them

The Commission is one of a growing number of bodies both in Australia and internationally, dedicated to preventing the collapse of society as we know it. It will ally and work with these groups to generate a safer future for Australia, Humanity and the Planet.

## **The risks**

The serious risks identified by the Commission for its work program are:

- Decline of key natural resources and the emerging global resource crisis
- Collapse of ecosystems that support life and the mass extinction of species
- Human population growth and demand, beyond the Earth's carrying capacity
- Global warming, sea level rise and changes in the Earth's climate affecting all human activity
- Universal chemical pollution of the Earth systems and all life
- Rising food insecurity and failing nutritional quality
- Weapons of mass destruction
- Pandemics of new and untreatable disease
- Advent of powerful, uncontrollable new technologies
- Widespread denial about these and related issues.

## **The Commission's central purpose is as follows.**

1. Provide trusted scientific advice to industry, government, media and the Australian public about the nature of all the major risks - and what can best be done to solve, mitigate or adapt to them.
2. Identify new opportunities for national economic and social growth and sustainability in solving the risks that face us.
3. Encourage policymaking that addresses all of the major risks we face in an integrated way.
4. Help build national consensus and engagement on the ways forward in meeting risks and so building new prosperity
5. Position Australia as a global leader in the new field of global catastrophic risk and its solutions

The Commission recognises that *none of these risks can be solved on their own*. They are all interlocked and require integrated solutions that make no risk worse and be acted on globally as well as nationally.

## **A unique body**

Australia at present has no organisation to provide trustworthy, independent advice to government, industry and society about the combination of the ten global catastrophic risks and their solutions. The Commission for the Human Future will fill that gap by bringing together the nation's best minds to address the total issue of these existential risks— and to identify new opportunities that arise from solving them. The Commission's primary task is to promote a wide discourse across Australian society about the nature and solution of these threats, and to promote the solutions and opportunities to which they give rise. In particular we recognise that solutions to the great risks depend not just on government policy and corporations, but also on the actions and behaviour of millions of individual humans in their daily lives. Much of our present behaviour must change if human civilization is to survive and prosper. We will share not only what society as a whole can do, but what each of us can do personally, to curb and remove these risks. We will help to empower Australians to build a safer, saner world.

## **The Commission will:**

- Conduct round tables of leading Australians from across society to explore and address individual and collective risks and their solutions
- Produce plain-language science-based reports on the key risks, their solution and the opportunities it creates.
- Provide an independent, scientifically valid source of advice to government, industry and society
- Promote national discussion of the issues and their solution
- Partner with likeminded bodies, both in Australia and worldwide, to ensure consistency and reliability of analysis and advice on key risks.
- Consider the development of a simple index to inform society of the current state of risk and how it is improving/deteriorating.

## **Funding and Further information**

The Commission has grown out of collaboration between The Australian National University (ANU) and Australia21 a national think tank for the public good, [www.australia21.org.au](http://www.australia21.org.au) . It is chaired by economist and former politician, Professor John Hewson AM and is managed by a diversely experienced board of fourteen. The ANU has committed significant funds to initiate the work of the Commission and Australia21 has facilitated the discussions and developed the website of the new body. [www.humansforsurvival.org](http://www.humansforsurvival.org) The Commission will be funded from public and private contributions from governments, industry, community institutions, philanthropic bodies and individuals. These will be fully exposed to public scrutiny. For more, Contact Em Prof Bob Douglas AO Secretary. 0409 233 138 [bobdouglas@netspeed.com.au](mailto:bobdouglas@netspeed.com.au) .