

Is Australia a Sustainability Superpower?

Terence Jeyaretnam

According to Hunter Lovins, co-author of *Natural Capitalism*, who recently toured Australia as part of a seminar and conference series organised by The Natural Edge Project (TNEP), Australia indeed has the potential to become a sustainability superpower. Coming from a leading advocate and writer in the sustainability arena, I must admit it sounded convincing, initially, and after some more thought, I was starting to believe in the claim. However, without going in to arguments and counter-arguments as to whether Australia is a sustainability super power, I will simply say that no nation can arguably lay claim to such a title, yet. I do admit that we, along with other nations have generated some demonstrable level of momentum towards the sustainability journey, but there is much yet to do. That said, let's digress to some pertinent reading materials in the field, namely two separate publications by Hunter and TNEP.

Natural Capitalism, published four years ago, has been described by Bill Clinton as "a huge deal". It has sold over 100,000 copies in 12 languages. The principles of *Natural Capitalism* provide the basis for a complete rethinking of business. They show how, contrary to conventional wisdom, far greater profits are achieved through protecting and enhancing nature, culture, and community than by harming them. The goal is no net loss of natural or social capital. No current balance sheet accurately captures the real economic value of natural or social capital. But no human system that systematically degrades either one can long endure. To achieve genuine prosperity and an economy worth sustaining, it is essential to ensure that neither form of capital is diminished. A highly recommended piece of reading if you were interested in the universal concept of sustainability. Paul Hawkin, Amory Lovins (CEO of Rocky Mountain Institute) and Hunter Lovins (President of Natural Capitalism Inc) were the authors of this remarkably insightful work.

Engineers Australia and the Environmental Engineering Society are Foundation Partners of TNEP, and have contributed to TNEP's major piece of work – *The Natural Advantage of Nations*, a book recently launched by Hunter Lovins at Enviro 04. Hunter Lovins is also one of the key contributors to the publication, developed by TNEP. The purpose of the book is to present a well grounded and peer reviewed blueprint for a nation to move towards a sustainable economy and to move hearts and minds, to inspire and enable students, practitioners, public servants, managers, and professionals to help them make substantial progress toward sustainability. I invite you to add both these publications to your bookshelf.

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