

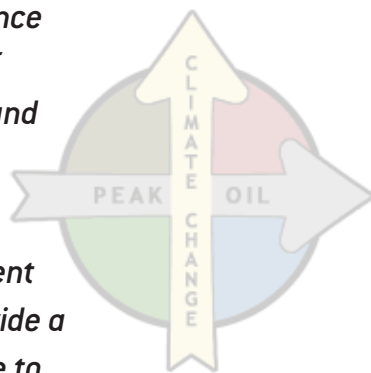
DOWN TO EARTH

A HISTORY FROM THE FUTURE

a prosperous way down

*Long time central Victorian resident and co-originator of the globally influential permaculture concept, David Holmgren draws on his **Future Scenarios** work to paint a picture of how simple household and community level strategies can build resilience to the hard emerging realities of economic contraction, peak oil and climate change.*

*Holmgren has spent decades modelling how low impact resilient ways of living and land use provide a happier and healthier alternative to dependent consumerism. In this story, based on an original presentation from the **Local Lives Global Matters** conference in Castlemaine 2015, he shows how these informed lifestyle choices and biological solutions become the basis for surfing the downslope of the emerging energy descent future.*



A LOCAL STORY FROM 2086

Prelude: The World at Energy Peak 2000-2015

At the turn of the 21st century the evidence for energy descent driven by peak oil and climate change was already strong. The quasi religious belief in continuous economic growth had a strong hold on collective psychology in central Victoria as much as anywhere in the world. The global financial system began to unravel in 2008 at the same time that global production of conventional oil peaked. For a minority it was increasingly obvious that the policies put in place ensured that the collapse was even more severe when it did come. It was like the powers that be had pushed the accelerator hard to the floor in one of those supercharged sports cars of the time, to attempt to jump across the widening chasm that humanity was facing.

The collapse of global financial growth unfolded differently in different places but here the story had many upsides that were partly due to luck and partly a result of visionaries and innovators who helped create a better future. These are the bare bones of how we got from what a few people still consider was the golden age to what we call the Earth Steward culture.

First Energy Descent Crisis 2017-2026

In 2017 the Australian property bubble burst. For our communities, this marked the start of the First Energy Descent Crisis (of the 21st century). Ballarat Bank was the first financial institution to fail and a government forced take over by the Commonwealth Bank saw the Community Bank network hived off as local lending co-ops backed by local government hoping to restart economic activity in regional towns that were increasingly on their own as State and Federal governments focused on dealing with hardship and social unrest in the cities.

The crisis was world wide, so dramatically reduced global Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the peak of global oil (what they called Total Liquids at the time) the same year was very much in line with the 1972 Limits To Growth report

default scenario showing industrial output peaking about that time. More recent studies suggest that net energy available to support humanity peaked closer to the turn of the millennium but it's all a moot point because it seems that economic growth had been a net drain on human welfare for decades before that.

As capital investment in oil fell off a cliff, and production from existing fields declined at nearly 10% there was a second oil price shock, a US currency collapse and a short war between the USA and China in 2022. Australia got punished in the trade embargo imposed by China. The economic crisis in China had already caused nearly 100 million of the recently urbanised workers to return to the villages, and reimposition of a command economy to continue the shift to renewable energy and revitalise agriculture. Consequently China was able to cope without Australian coal and gas and there was so much scrap steel in the world that the iron ore exports had come to a standstill.

While oil and food remained costly (at least relative to falling wages) most manufactured goods were dirt-cheap. Solar panels from China (somehow getting around the trade embargo) accelerated the trend for retail customers going off grid which, combined with collapse of commercial demand for electricity, led to a “Death Spiral” in the power grid with rising prices and increasing blackouts (and surges due to excess wind and solar inputs).



A newly elected Federal Labor government renationalised the power grid, along with price controls, rationing an Australia ID card allowing rationed access to subsidised supermarkets that had been experiencing shortages of fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy.

In Victoria, a Liberal government implemented policies to encourage people to be more self-reliant. Permaculture education was adopted as a framework for integrating aspects of self-reliance including home food production, owner building, water harvesting and waste management.

Rationing of fuel led to hitch-hiking, ride sharing and in rural areas a rush to convert vehicles to wood gas. Bicycles became the default personal transport around town in Castlemaine but in Daylesford and Hepburn, electric bikes and vehicles powered by the *Hepburn Wind* charging stations installed for tourists before the property bubble burst maintained mobility for locals.



Conversion of vehicles to wood gas by a range of bush mechanics and ex-hot rodders had mixed success. The market value of higher powered larger vehicles and trucks rose as a result of the first wave of conversions. The *Castlemaine Obtainium Engineering Institute* was established to test and improve local

designs and prototypes. One of the motivations was a competitive spirit with the electric car networks centred in Daylesford and Ballarat.

Use of Bitcoin (a virtual currency), local currencies, precious metals and barter all increased to support exchange in the rapidly growing informal and grey economies. Bitcoin then failed in mysterious circumstances after being targeted for funding terrorism.

The Internet began functioning again after major breakdowns during the conflict between the US and China. But Facebook and Amazon were bankrupt, cyberspace was littered with defunct and unmaintained sites and Internet

marketing was plagued by cyber crime and draconian government regulations. Local computer networks using wireless technology, as well as a revival of two-way radio, started building back to basics communication pathways.

Great Central Victorian Drought and Bushfire 2025

Central Victoria was then hit by the Great Drought and Bushfires of 2025. In northern Victoria a 10% drop in average rainfall over the preceding years had left Lake Eppalock and Cairn Curran reservoirs as largely stranded assets and the superpipe that was built to steal water from the Goulburn River to keep Ballarat and Bendigo green, meant the collapse of irrigated agriculture in northern Victoria was more or less inevitable. Dryland cropping and grazing in good seasons could only support a regional economy one quarter of that which irrigation cropping, dairying and horticulture could. The regional town economies collapsed and large numbers of people left the region.

A revival of Yorta Yorta land claims to the dying Murray forests and wetlands was successful and after the late 20s La Nina wet years an outstation movement took disaffected aboriginal youth to work in the forest thinning the dense regrowth and reviving cultural practices.

In the southern uplands of our river catchments, fires all but burnt out the Upper Loddon and Wombat Forests. The cash strapped Victorian and Federal





governments failed to come through with the disaster relief that people expected and the collapse of the global financial re-insurance system resulted in very few successful insurance claims. The Victorian government decided to close the Single Line Earth Return powerlines that had started most of the bushfires. (The

2009 Bushfire royal commission had recommended putting them underground but the cost precluded this even before the economy collapsed). Country Fire Authority (CFA) services to all but the most fire safe rural areas were cancelled and people were offered cents on the dollar buyback of their properties with an assumption that people would mostly relocate to new apartments being retro-fitted in warehouses of downsized and bankrupted businesses in Melbourne and Geelong.

Green Tech Scenario 2027-2060: Global Green Divide

In these difficult conditions the Chinese government offered disaster recovery teams to rebuild basic infrastructure and create new employment programs. This influenced Victoria to sign a new free trade deal with China against the wishes of the national government, which was still strongly aligned with the USA. Part of the deal was that the Chinese government and investors would buy out much of the marginal farmland for timber plantations that would yield biochar to revive the productivity of Chinese agricultural land (and show its continuing commitment to global climate targets). The Carbon Sequestration Corporation became the largest single land-owner in Victoria. A new 200MgW power station at Woodend took clear-felled fire killed and damaged trees from the Wombat Forest over 10 years and yielded biochar for field trials across China (and locally). This also helped stabilise the grid after the closure of many of the Latrobe valley coal fired power stations and created many more jobs than the coal industry had at its peak.



At the same time city investors fleeing the collapsing property market bought into much of the best volcanic farmland between Woodend and Ballarat and the remaining tradable water rights from northern Victoria (tapping the deep lead and other aquifers of the volcanic landscapes). Many of these investors turned out to be Chinese Australians with understanding of, and connections to, the government-to-government investment in forestry for biochar.

In the late 20's La Nina wet years, there was massive regrowth of vegetation across the region including the abandoned irrigation districts in northern Victoria.

Shepherds grazing sheep and goats kept the country open and fire safe. Ecological hunting (mostly of kangaroo and deer) for dried meat and hides expanded rapidly on abandoned farmland after wildlife law reform including royalty payments to local aboriginal clans for commercial use of all native and naturalised wild animals.



Amalgamated ownership of rural land in the mid to higher rainfall uplands and falling labour costs led to large scale forestry and tree crop plantations using central Victorian keyline water harvesting, soil rehabilitation and tree planting technology pioneered by Regrarians, Captains Creek Organic Farm and others within and beyond the region. In combination with biochar additions, the irrigation water needed to establish tree crops and grow traditional potato crops fell from 6Mglits/hectare to less than 2 despite the gradually drying climate. Integration of tree crops and forestry shelterbelts on the previously windswept volcanic plains accounted for a significant part of the drop in water demand. Trees grown from the 1980s through to the beginning of the crisis, by tree crops pioneers Jason Alexandra, Rod May, Vern Howell, Tim Burns and others provided the seed stock for a rapid expansion of plantings on the better soils.



The Retro Suburban Economy

As the formal economy of construction and services faltered, regional town economies were revitalised by migration from northern Victoria and the marginal hinterlands, Chinese aid and investment in forest salvage and farming. A minority of small rural landholders rejected the government buyback and dug in for more self-reliant living as local governments ploughed up sealed roads because the declining rate base could not support road maintenance. Instead of moving to the new government warehouse apartments in Melbourne and Geelong most of the hinterland population consolidated in extended family and shared households in

Ballarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Kyneton. The ‘Retrofitting the Suburbs’ movement became the core of this town revitalisation. It grew from permaculture inspired early adopters and a book, *RetroSuburbia* by David Holmgren that became a best seller after the property bubble burst.

Social and economic life in residential areas boomed as home-based work replaced commuting for most people. Research at the time showed it was the radical retrofitting of personal and collective behaviour (more than the built and biological retrofits) that made the Retrofitting movement so successful at increasing household and neighbourhood well-being. A co-housing version of retrofitting based on work done by Murrnong Co-Housing Community in Castlemaine integrated adjacent households into more collective organisation.

Circulation of a locally popular Silver Bee 1oz coin before the depression became a widely recognised currency and the Sugar Gum local currency based on original LETS expanded along with barter and gift exchange.

Cuts for funding in the health and education systems led to increasing dysfunction and the Australian ID card was required for access to both education and health services. The Federal government opposition floated the idea of chip implants for “at risk” school children to combat terrorism. Home birth, home education and the dying at home movements expanded rapidly from local networks.

Victorian government support for home birth midwives to reduce demand for hospital services led to nearly 40% of babies in Central Victoria being born at home. The rate of stillbirths and complications fell slightly as a result. Death doula services in Daylesford and Castlemaine provided support leading to 60% of deaths over 75 years of age being at home. A co-op of mainstream and alternative health professionals aware of energy descent implications for the health system established in the old Daylesford hospital after the governmental closed all rural hospitals, began the development of health care for energy descent.



Garden agriculture for household needs on a backyard scale spawned the growth of small scale commercial enterprises using biochar, worm composting of human waste, biofertilisers and other eco-technic innovations.

A simple biochar kiln developed and promoted by local renewable technology pioneer Joel Meadows became a universal tool by which the forests around towns were thinned for small wood to convert to biochar.

Goat herders replaced machines and herbicide in managing riparian, forest and urban fringe vegetation inspired by the Hepburn Community Forest Gully Goats enterprise.



Small-scale poultry, dairy and meat production expanded rapidly as thriving grey markets were legalised. Farmers' markets and Community Supported Agriculture took 20% of the fresh food market from the struggling supermarkets. When the percentage hit 40% in Daylesford and Castlemaine, the big supermarkets closed. This intensified conflict between the "command economics"

of the Labour federal government and the "libertarian economics" of the Liberal state government and was expressed locally through ugly demonstrations and clashes at some Farmers' markets and veggie box farms.

Goat shepherds ranged over much of the non-arable land regrowing to a mix of gorse, blackberry, acacias, eucalypts and pines. Little of the fencing lost in the bushfires had been rebuilt. Goat dairy products modelled on Holy Goat products become a signature export of the region. Some conflicts develop between local goat herders as the new landowners enforced their control to protect regrowth and plantations from the goats.

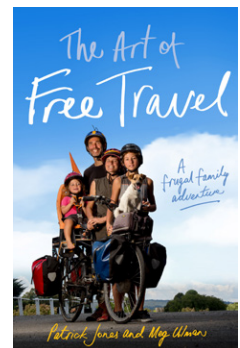
On some of the non-arable land, especially on the granite country around Harcourt, apple orchards and olive groves (many recovering after bushfires)

and newly naturalised seedling trees expanded to create extensive unirrigated “food forests” that are today central to our Earth Steward culture. Groups of town residents camping in the countryside for weeks at a time during the harvest season was partly a continuation of the Australian tradition of camping at “Easter time” (an old Christian holiday imported from the northern hemisphere) and a reconnection for many with the rural lifestyle people lost when they moved into town.



Cider making, olive pickling and pressing were collective activities at the various facilities around the district that had been established in the last decades of the 20th century. Campfire roasting of wild meats and chestnuts were the staple foods of what became the annual harvest festival. Yam daisy digging grounds were established around abandoned homestead garden sites where elevated fertility supported the selected strains of this indigenous staple that began to naturalise.¹

Models and inspiration for this important part of the non-monetary economy and culture were the pre-existing apple and olive growing and processing businesses of the region, a Community Orchard project by a group called Growing Abundance, the commons and gift economy activism of *Artist As Family* (“The Art of Free Travel”) and the failure of nativist land management after the great naturalisations of late 20’s La Nina years. Everyone came to accept that all species were part of nature and that the old idea that there was good biodiversity and bad biodiversity was abandoned.



1 There was concern that many of the old homestead sites were contaminated with arsenic from 20th century treated pine timber that was used in abundance but soil testing by the William Albrecht Lab in Bendigo showed these soils could be successfully buffered by mineral rebalancing and biochar.

Prior to harvest, itinerant falconers (mostly ex-Iranians refugees) were paid² to patrol the groves to keep pest birds at bay. Over the years and decades as good quality warm clothing from the boom time economy wore out, shooters collected cockatoo feather down for use in locally made down jackets and sleeping bags.

Campers cut timber for rough camp constructions and firewood as well as keeping the groves and orchards free of eucalypt regrowth. Although this conflicted with the interests of the big land owners focused on maximising woody biomass from eucalypt and acacia regrowth and new plantations, the foresters employed by the owners were much more concerned with the impact of the goat herders on new Sugar Gum plantations and regrowth. There were many small conflicts as owners tried to enforce their control of the land. Back in the 20's, the old land tenure system gave "owners" (as opposed to our "stewards") all rights (except to minerals). Eventually an agreement brokered by the aboriginal clans and recognised by the government, gave the goat herders the right to access unfenced country (thus maintaining open and fire safe landscapes) and the rights of locals to manage and harvest community orchards and groves, all outside the monetary economy.

Both sides understood the importance of the other economy to stabilise the landscape and maintain order in the community. Establishing new plantations, thinning regrowth and making biochar were all relatively labour intensive

tasks (although innovative adaptation of old machinery and some fancy imported Chinese forestry equipment played a big role in the biomass industry). The owners knew the wages they paid were not enough for their workers to support their families, and that harvesting the commons was an important economic supplement along with



2 *In cider and olive oil*

garden agriculture and home self-reliance. In addition, harvesting the commons gave the locals the sense that this was still their country and ensured that forestry workers knew the local terrain and resources better than the professional foresters who supervised their work.

Wood gasification plants proliferated to support mini grids at communities and larger farms with waste heat used to bottom heat poly tunnels for early and out of season vegie production. The first of these was established at Fryers Forest Ecovillage using a Sanderson 15kW wood gasification power plant with waste heat to dry timber and a water pumping wind turbine at Captains Creek Farm used in winter to bottom heat poly tunnels.



The Green Regrowth Years 2035-2059

In 2035 Hepburn Wind bought out the local grid from the Federal Energy Corporation to create the first town scale grid in Australia based on solar, wind with wood gasification base load and electric vehicle and household battery storage.

The red volcanic soils from Ballarat to Woodend were intensively managed for export agriculture. After nearly two decades of biochar additions, the red soils were now black with water and nutrient holding capacity above the levels of the best organic farms back in 2016. Measured carbon sequestration from soil carbon, tree crops and high quality shelterbelt forestry, continued to increase beyond the levels achieved in the moderate rainfall eucalypt forests on the adjacent sedimentary soils.

Redwood plantations on the Great Divide at Mollonghip were measured capturing fog inception equivalent to 500mm of rainfall. Expanded plantations gave hope for the restarting of springs and base flow in local creeks.

The railway from Woodend to Ballarat via Daylesford was reconstructed in the early 30's by the government with support from Chinese investors. It followed the old gold era route. The trains were transporting forest and horticultural produce to ports, and passengers between Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne. The diesel engines were powered by a then innovative charcoal water slurry fuel.

Forest regrowth and new plantations, especially sugar gum and weeds, massively expanded the available forage for honey bees across the region. Australia remained free of Varroa mite after the collapse of world trade and travel reduced the risks.



A combination of large scale migratory apiaries (mostly using wood gasifier trucks) and small-scale sedentary bee keepers, many urban based, expanded the number of hives in the region and the yield of honey. Pollination services also expand.

From the ranges to the Murray, the ups and downs of the seasonal harvests became a barometer of the bioregional economy and the amount of money circulating in the “Sugar Gum” local currency was

formally linked to the standing volume of the local forests. Honey became the most valued export to China, and Castlemaine was promoted to international eco-tourists as the honey capital of the world.

By 2050 the central and western Victorian population was 80% higher than 2015 with migration from northern Victoria and Melbourne to service the growing agricultural and forestry based industries.

The health status of the population was amongst the best in Australia in part due to improved soil fertility and local diet of largely organic produce but also

because of the highly successful renovation of the regional hospital network using a combination of low tech allopathic, homeopathic and Chinese medical knowledge that emerged from the regional spread of the Daylesford Hospital Energy Descent Health Co-op model and Chinese government funding of the revitalised Ballarat Base Hospital.

School and university education was reformed with a strong focus on practical learning in sustainable agriculture and resource use, health and well-being. The region's permaculture education networks that had been growing slowly for decades before the First Energy Descent Crisis were instrumental in the reform process. The proliferation of tertiary courses in permaculture around the same time was one of the few success stories for universities during the depression. A post-graduate course that started in Adelaide in 2016 was responsible for increasing acceptance of permaculture as the conceptual framework for designed responses to energy descent realities.³

In Melbourne the population fell to 2 million from a combination of reduced immigration, population aging and increased mortality during the crisis of 2017-2026. On the global scale, population was down from a peak of 7.6 billion to 6, somewhat less than predicted in the Limits to Growth model of 1972. Greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be down to 1970's levels due to economic contraction and partial renewable energy conversion.

Carbon sequestration from natural regrowth, reforestation, biochar technologies and carbon farming were estimated to exceed emissions achieving "no net emissions" by 2050, in ways quite different from those proposed in environmental and policy mainstream before the crisis. Although the world was not spared from what at the time was called "dangerous climate change", by 2050 there was some evidence of climate stabilisation.

³ It is important to note that although permaculture more recently became discredited after it became a corrupted old boys' network in decaying education institutions, the creative ecological design for energy descent associated with the lifetime of David Holmgren, its younger co-originator and local resident, was carried forward by grass roots local activists who found other labels more useful in developing the strategy's products.



Ballarat became the new capital of Victoria in response to seven key factors:

- the derelict condition of Melbourne CBD.
- the lack of interest by Chinese investors in city real estate and infrastructure.
- the agricultural boom across Western districts and the south east of South Australia.
- the highly successful local renewable power grid that grew out of Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions.
- the scope of suburban retrofitting pioneered by the Ballarat Permaculture Guild.
- the successful medical networks centred at Ballarat Base Hospital.
- the center for research and demonstration of sustainable forestry and tree crop agriculture at the old Creswick Forestry school supported by successful Chinese landowners.

Over a period of libertarian Liberal government, central Victoria was a relatively prosperous region. Making Ballarat the capital coincided with a renewed focus by government on how to increase the money economy and therefore the tax

base. Finding the money to renew Melbourne infrastructure and relieve the high unemployment, poor health and education standards and address the relatively high crime and corruption levels. The Restoration Conservatives came to power in 2060 aiming to use foreign investment to rebuild a green tech globalised society while accepting the need for a working class majority. Their platform was based on concessions to foreign businesses that would provide trickle down wealth and services to the rest of society.

The third main political party was the Deep Green Bioregionalists whose policies promoted a post-materialist culture with more self-sufficient local economies and greater autonomy and equity. Their platform was to allow each shire to vote for the level of government services (and consequent taxation levels) 1950, 1920, 1890, 1830.⁴ This was popular in more self-reliant regional and rural communities where tax burden was a big issue. Inefficient and at times ineffective government services became less valued as household and community level low-tech infrastructure and behavioural work-arounds became normalised. These policies were very controversial in the Murdoch dominated NSW and national presses and used as evidence that Victoria was in danger of collapsing to a lunatic green fringe that wanted to push Australia back to the stone age.

2060- 2069: Breakup of the Australian Federation and the 2nd Energy Descent Crisis

In 2060, Australia was still aligned with the much reduced and divided USA while WA and NT had strong economic and cultural links to the Indo-Malay Federation. Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania were more strongly influenced by the relatively large and affluent ethnic Chinese population with strong economic links and dependence on China and the wider east Asian federation of Japan and Korea. With little economic or social improvement in the big cities,

⁴ This first emerged in a future short story **Retrotopia** written before the crisis by J.M.Greer a prolific American author of the period who did much to articulate and explain the Energy Descent concept. There is still much debate amongst historians of the period over whether Greer was primarily influenced by our local energy descent visionary David Holmgren or whether it was the other way round.

but relatively robust rural and regional economies, the Australian government and Murdoch media started directing anger of the urban under class against Chinese and Indonesian interests and assets.

After a series of high profile arson attacks on forests and farms, Victorian police were seconded to protect Chinese assets and communities. The state government agreements with China and the influence of the Chinese Australian business elite increased tensions with a much-weakened federal government.

In 2062, Western Australia and Northern Territory seceded from Australia after a long period of resentment and increasing isolation from any remaining benefits of national government. In 2065, the Chinese government supported the political autonomy move by Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in the Southern Australian Federation.

Control of major ports in these states by the Australian Navy, combined with disruption of state government services, finance and communications led to a radical decline in agricultural exports and the 2nd Energy Descent Crisis.⁵

Earth Steward Scenario 2060 – present: Bioregional Renewal

After a period of great confusion and economic sanctions but no major military conflict or bloodshed, migration back to Melbourne began the restoration of derelict suburban landscapes based on the Central Victorian *RetroSuburbia* model. The realisation of well being based on vibrant household and community non-monetary economies across a re-ruralised Melbourne set the scene for the Deep Green Bioregionalists coming to power in 2070.

Restoration of low-tech communications and effective local government combined with the blocking of Australian government Internet propaganda

⁵ *Of course the global nuclear waste processing and thorium nuclear power plants at Roxby Downs that provided most of South Australia's electricity and income remained under central government control. Effectively it was only the populated South East of the old state of South Australia that became part of the Southern Australian Federation with an economy based on sustainable use of renewable resources. The dispute between the indigenous landowners of the central deserts and the Eastern Australian Federation over Roxby Downs continues to this day.*

under the previous Restoration Conservative government had already reduced the level of hysteria, rumour and paranoia that had been endemic in Melbourne for generations.

The decline in the central and western Victorian (and north Tasmanian) export economies and the gradual improvement in household and community non-monetary economies in Melbourne created a more equal society. On the other hand there was reduced capacity to sustain the high tech health, education and communications that had benefited the elite in the Global Green Divide world.

While community governance was still problematic in Melbourne, the devolution of power to the bioregional councils based on river catchments was very successful, especially in our region where a new coherence of culture from the mountains to the Murray made easier consensus in managing resources for the shared benefit of the catchment communities.

But forest regrowth including deciduous species colonised much farmland abandoned after the blockade of ports.

A slow recovery of more self-sufficient bioregional economies with less dependence on overseas trade occurred right across the Southern Australian Federation with populations gradually shifting to reflect bioregional carrying capacity.

By 2080 we had most transactions using the “Sugar Gum” local currency. The gold backed New Yuan global trade currency was most used for the modest growth in overseas trade.



Goat herders control vegetation and fire risk in rehydrated and revegetated riparian and forest farm landscapes, producing the local hard cheeses traded to Melbourne and overseas. Hard hoofed animals are excluded from the sacred rainforest groves around the headwater springs that are gradually getting stronger with the passing decades.

Honey, mushrooms, botanic medicinals, eco technic services and eco tourism are the basis of restored trade with China and East Asia through the ports of Geelong, Warnambool and Melbourne, following the 2082 settlement between the Southern, Eastern and Western Australian federations.

Forest farming of tree crops has now overtaken broad acre cropping of annual grains as the main source of sustenance for our region. The natural regeneration of nut forests⁶ along the Great Divide volcanic soils generate neohybrid swarms of superior nut bearing trees that show promise of great resilience and productivity compared to the declining clonal orchards and groves of the late 20th century.

Perennial abundance envisaged a century ago promises to sustain our descendants through the coming centuries of more benign and gradual energy descent as the last vestiges of the fossil fuelled boom fades.

That's the bare bones of an ecological and energetic history, mapping how the now emergent pan-Gaian Earth Steward culture took root in our bioregion over the lifetime of our elders. As the visionary of 20th century ecological energetics Howard Odum put it, "A Prosperous Way Down."



6 Mostly chestnut, bunya, macadamia, oaks



This edgy but inspiring story suggests we have lots of work to do now, to survive and thrive this, or a myriad of other possible local and global scenarios. This story shows one way the 21st century could play out in central Victoria. It is grounded in the possible and probable but gives hope for a prosperous way down. David Holmgren believes that what people do at home really can help shape the future for the better.

*The retrosuburban economy that is central to the story is already growing wherever folks are making incremental changes for the better, to their houses, gardens and lifestyles. In his upcoming book **RetroSuburbia: A downshifters guide to a resilient future**, David Holmgren draws on his decades of experience of living and inspiring others to redesign their lives with permaculture and voluntary simplicity.*

*If you are ready and looking for some help to fast track your own personal, household and neighbourhood transition to a more resilient future, then **RetroSuburbia** is the book you have been waiting for. Like this story, the local focus in Melbourne and Victoria includes specific design solutions tailored to home territory, but most of the book will be applicable anywhere folks are looking to redesign for a better life now, and a truly prosperous future for children, grandchildren and the wider world.*

For more, visit RetroSuburbia.com

Credits:

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