GreenPrints: bioregional approach to living within our ecological limits


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About AELA

- Created in 2012
- Mission: to increase the **understanding and practical implementation of Earth centred governance** – law, economics, education, ethics and the arts
- "Earth jurisprudence"
- AELA is focussed on creating *systems* change
- multi/trans disciplinary

Earth jurisprudence calls for us to examine the root causes of the current crisis and shift all our **governance systems** from human centred to Earth centred
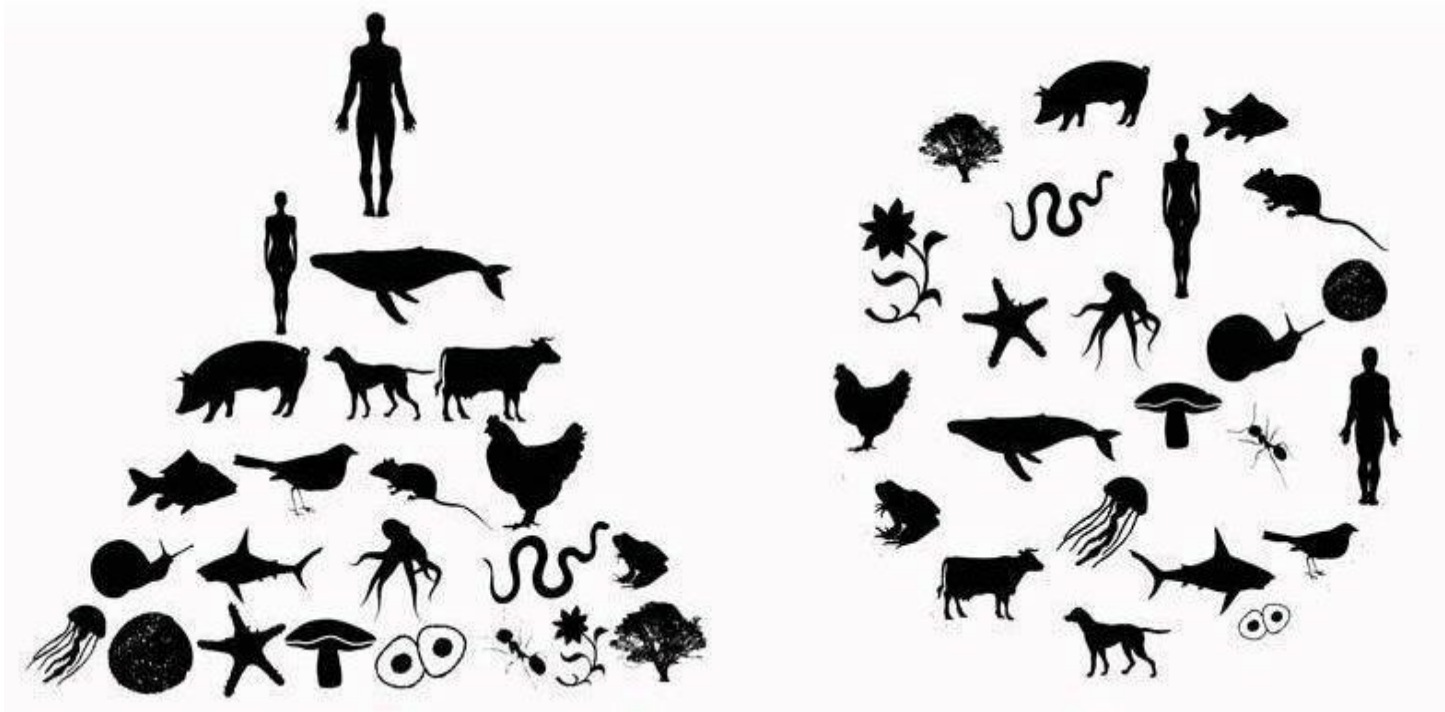
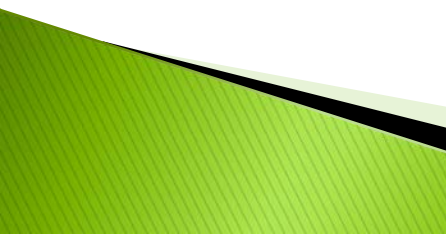Human centred   Earth centred

"the ideas that lie beneath"

Economic –
Consumer capitalism
(Corporatism)

Social/cultural
(consumer culture)

Legal, Political &
Institutional

Beliefs, Ideology, culture –
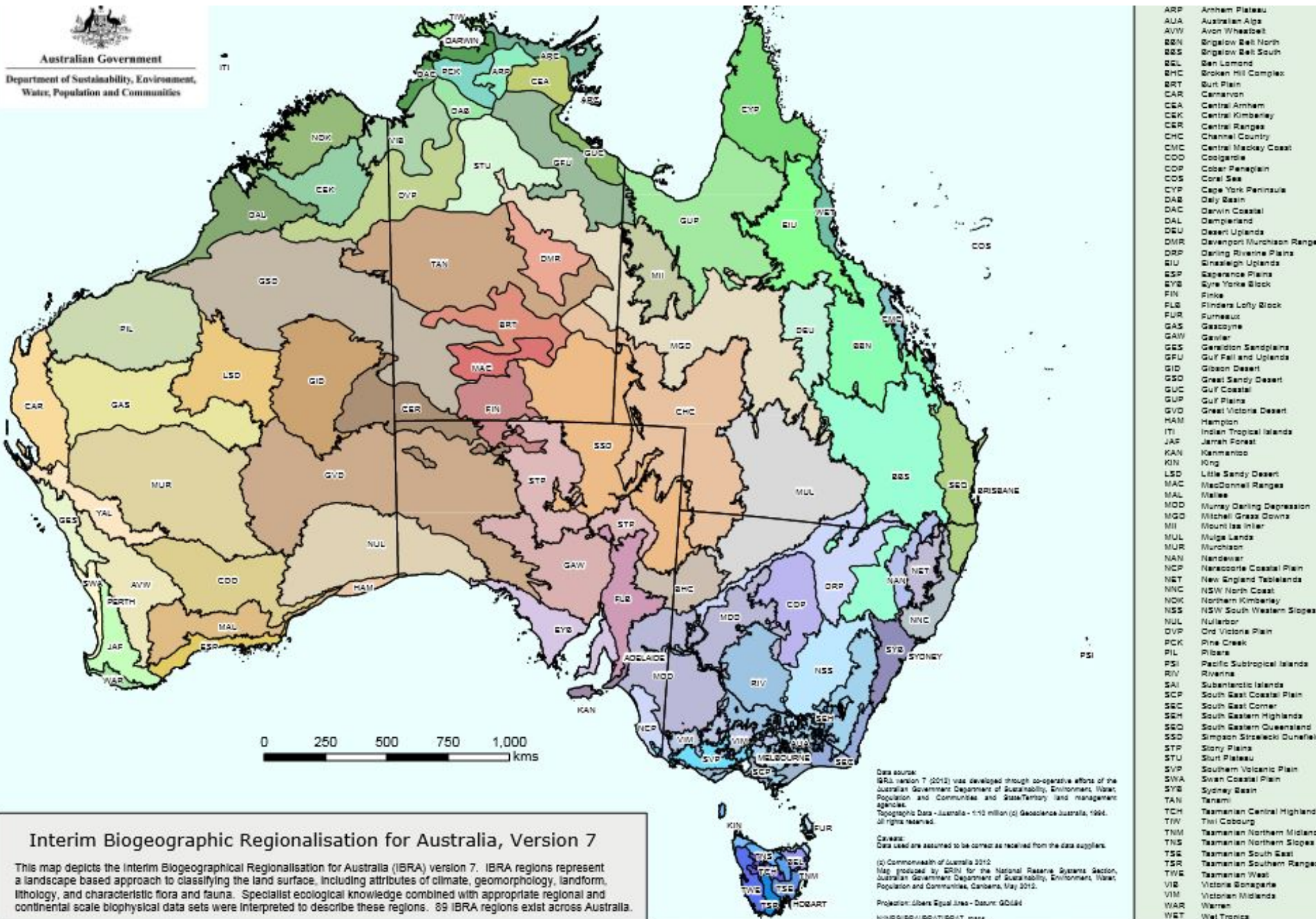anthropocentrism +
pro growth

GreenPrints – a pathway

- GreenPrints focuses on a critical question: how can we create governance systems that help us live within our ecological limits and support the rest of the living world?

- While we have 'blueprints' to document the design of building and engineering projects, we don't yet have effective 'greenprints' for helping us construct the governance systems we need, to build Earth centred societies that can be sustained in a climate changed world and nurture the Earth community.
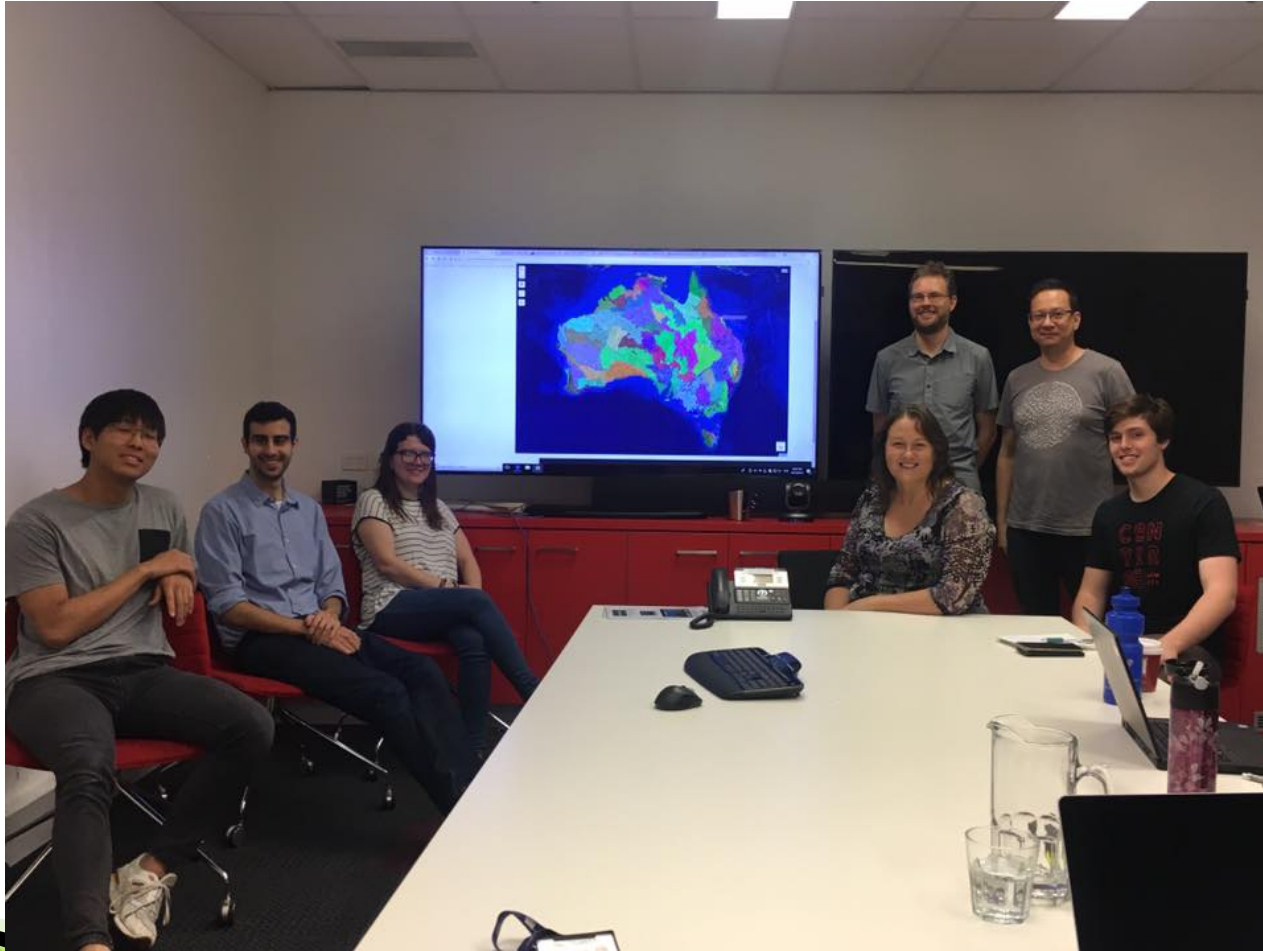
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Starting point – ecological health

Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia, Version 7

This map depicts the Interim Biogeographical Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) version 7. IBRA regions represent a landscape based approach to classifying the land surface, including attributes of climate, geomorphology, landform, lithology, and characteristic flora and fauna. Specialist ecological knowledge combined with appropriate regional and continental scale biophysical data sets were interpreted to describe these regions. 89 IBRA regions exist across Australia.

"citizen governance" – easy to use mapping tool to help

# Three 'big' problems GreenPrints is addressing

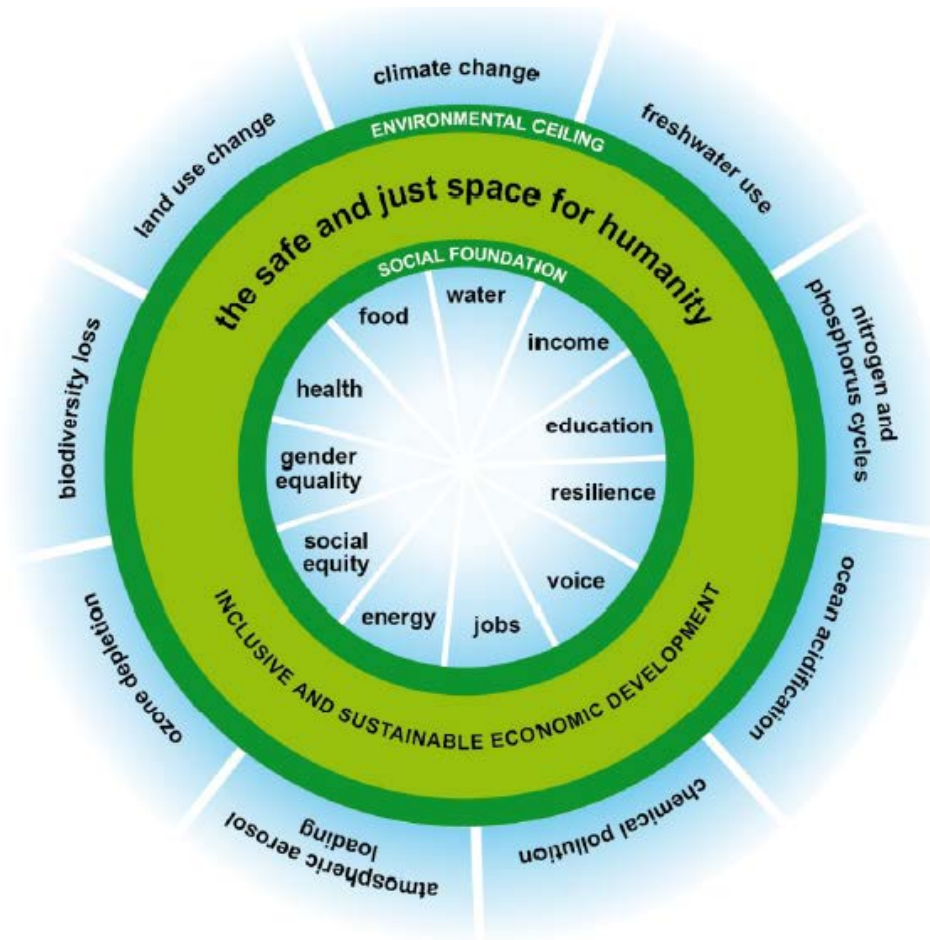# (1) Problem – pro–growth culture and governance

GROWTH ECONOMICS
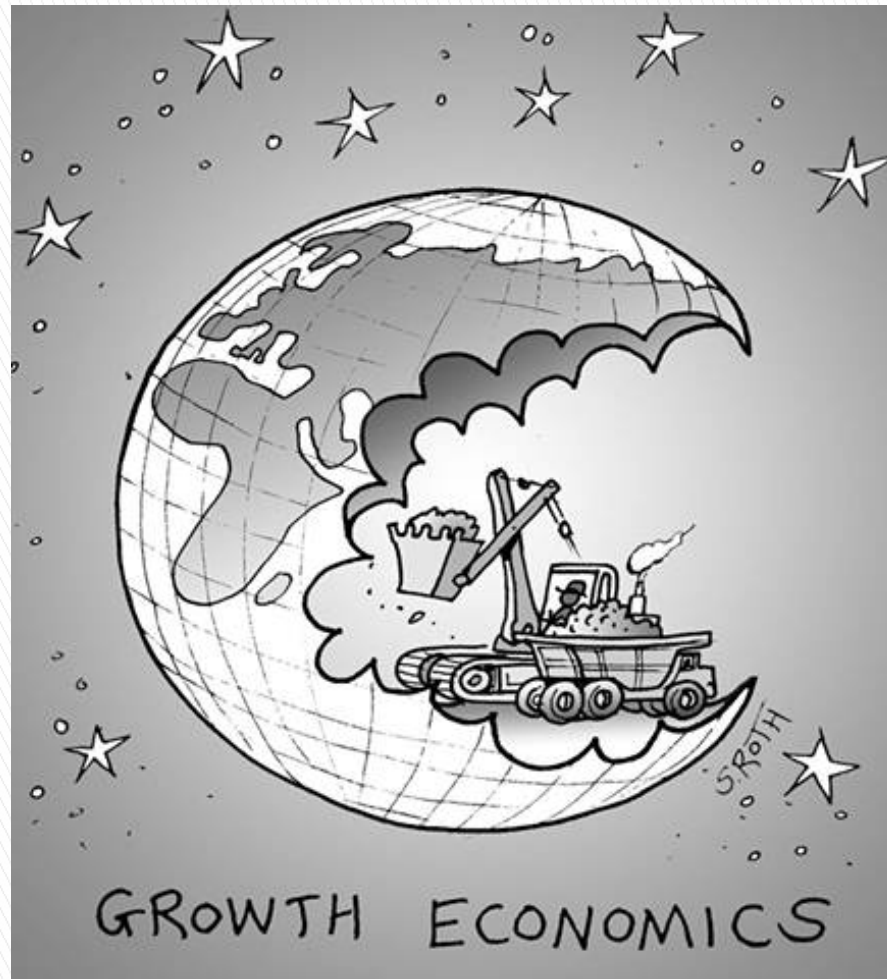
# 2015 – 4 out of 9 "Planetary Boundaries" now crossed

- Climate change
- Biosphere integrity
- Nitrogen and Phosphorous biogeochemical cycles
- Change in land use
- Ocean acidification
- Ozone depletion
- Global freshwater use
- Atmospheric aerosol loading
- Chemical pollution
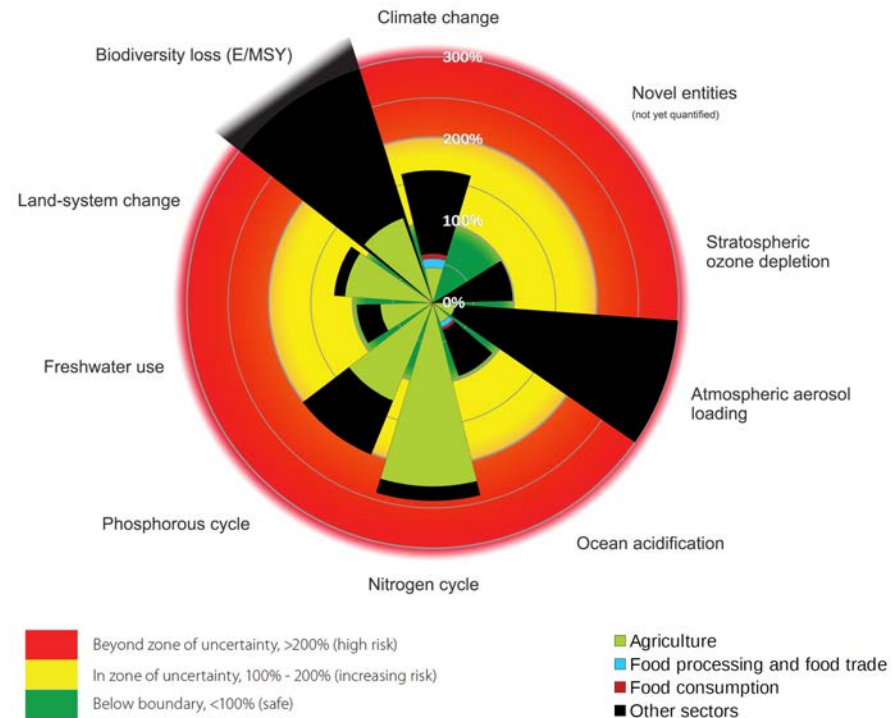
Doughnut economics

(2) Problem – *political jurisdictions and governance* disconnected from ecological reality (ie human centred, pro-growth)
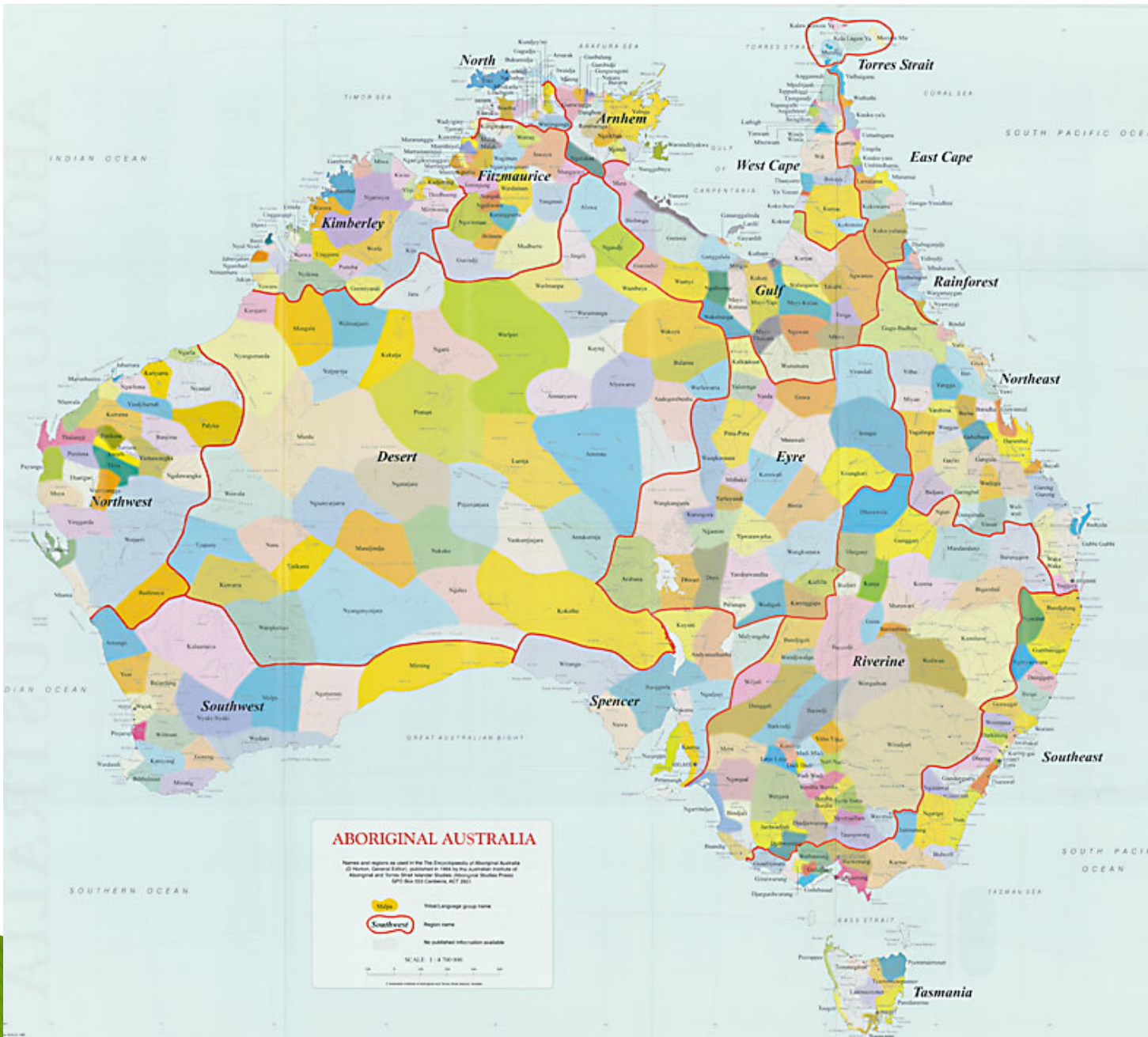
In 1788
this continent
experienced
a dramatic
shift in
governance

From
60,000+
years of
effective,
local,
Earth-centred,
Steady-state
governance …

ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIA

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To 230 years of environmentally disconnected governance, based on human centred, pro-growth culture and medieval English laws
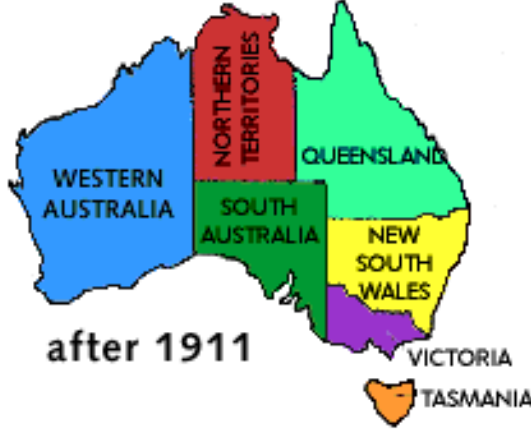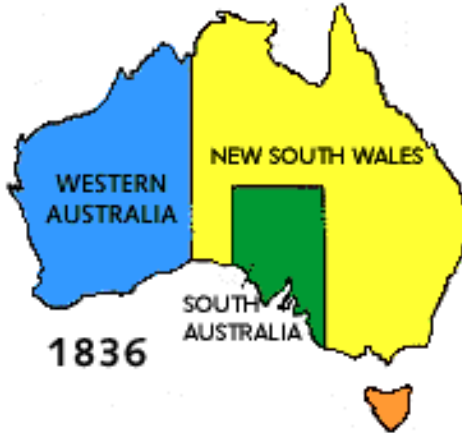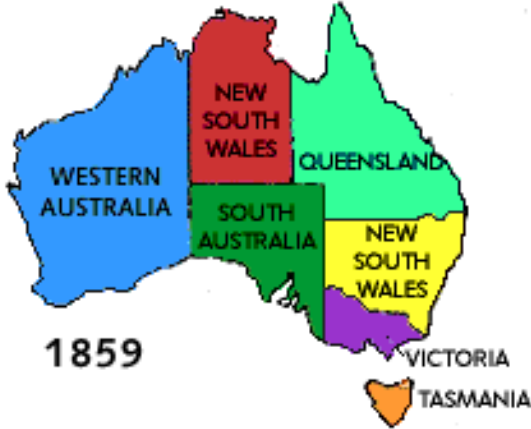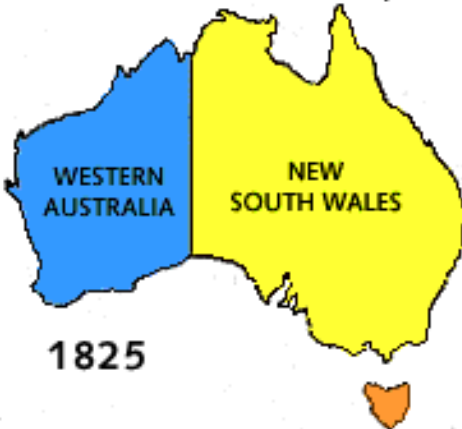
# One simple, but stark example of the impacts of the governance shift
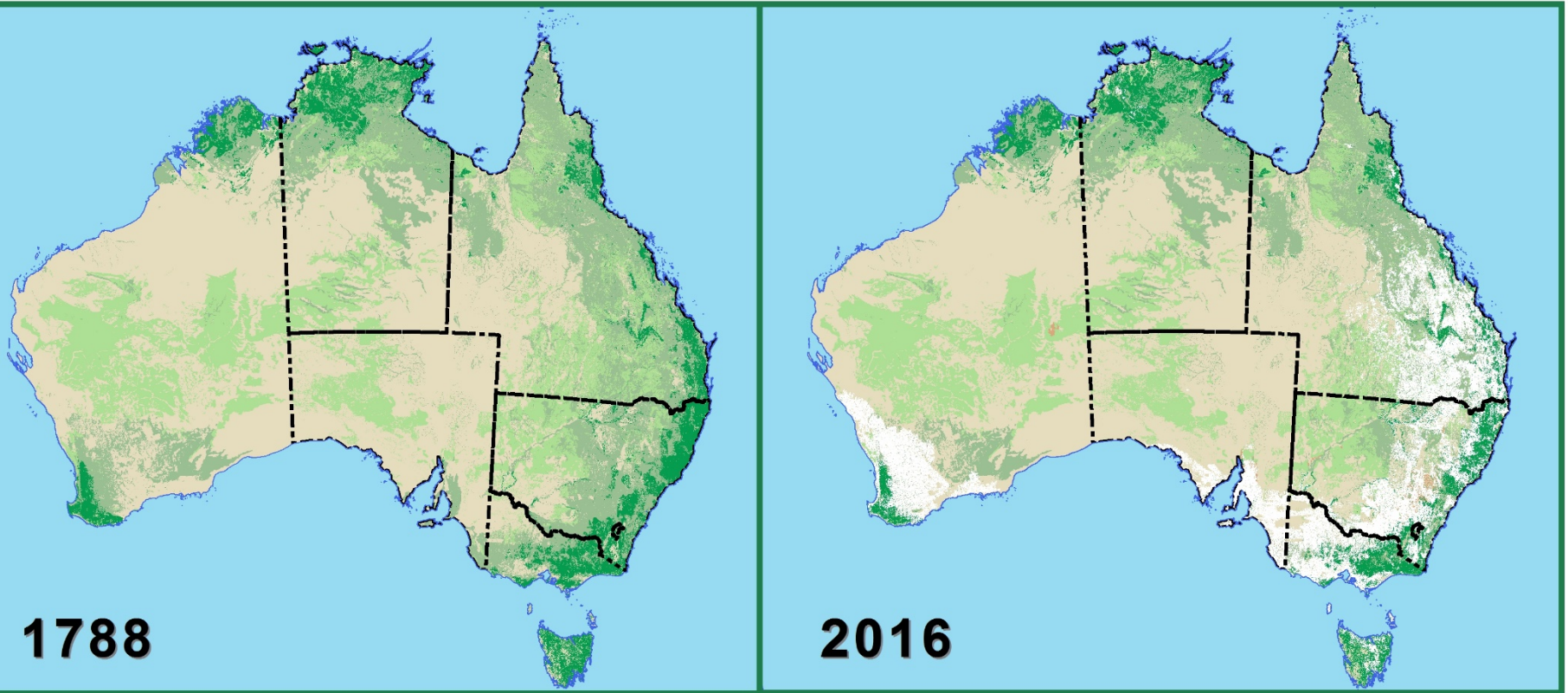
1788

2016

Vegetation Loss in Australia 1788-2016

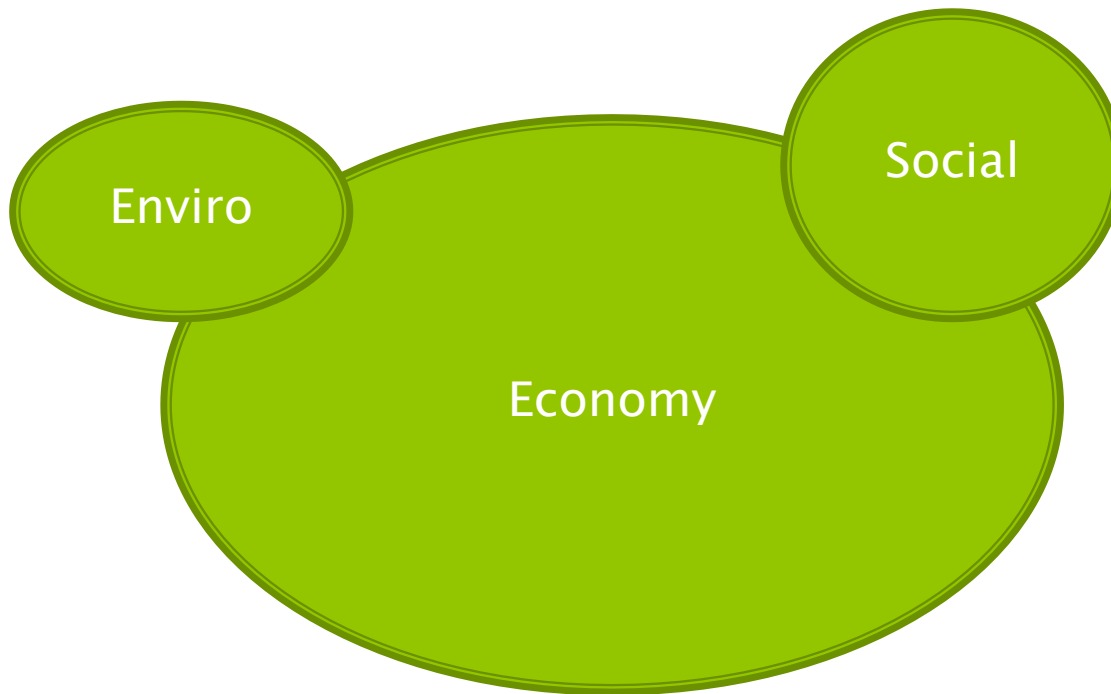|		Loss
■	Eucalypt Forests and Rainforest	20.1%
■	Eucalypt Woodlands	27.8%
■	Other Forests or Woodlands	10.5%
■	Other vegetation (no trees)	6.0%
□	Cleared since 1788	13.0%

(3) Problem – ineffective models of sustainability

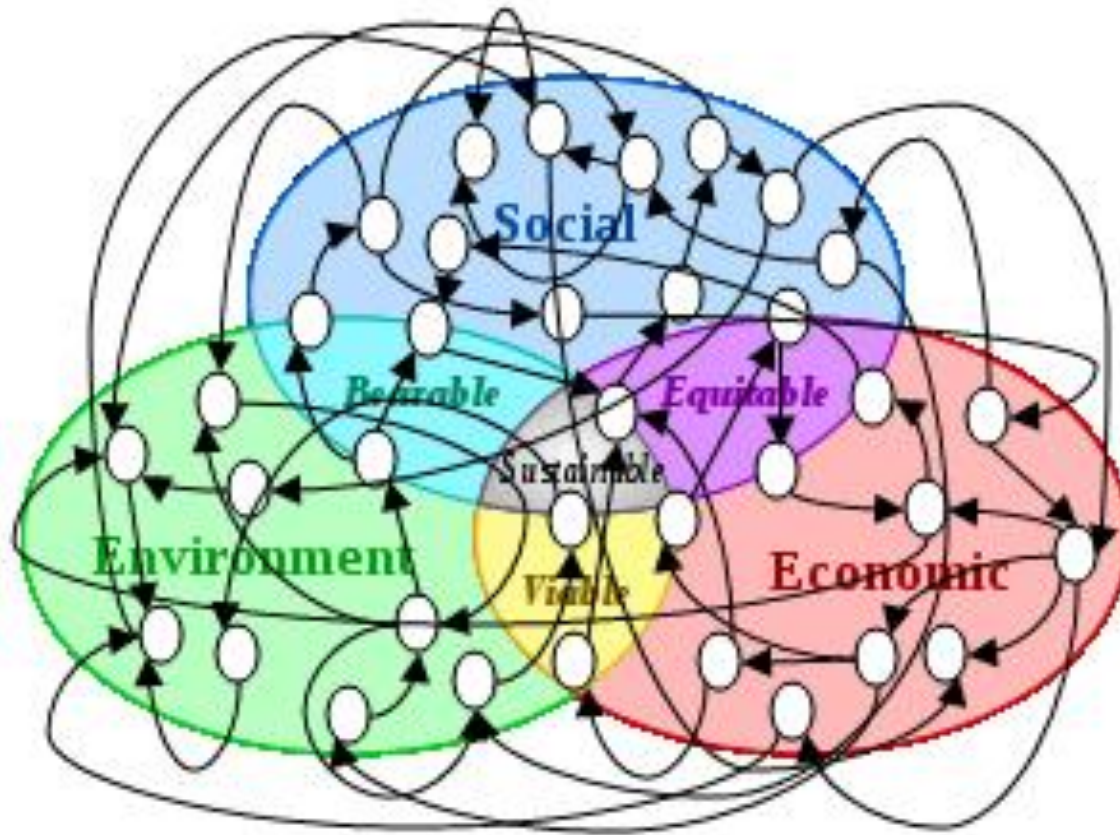## Mickey Mouse Sustainability vs Nested Sustainability

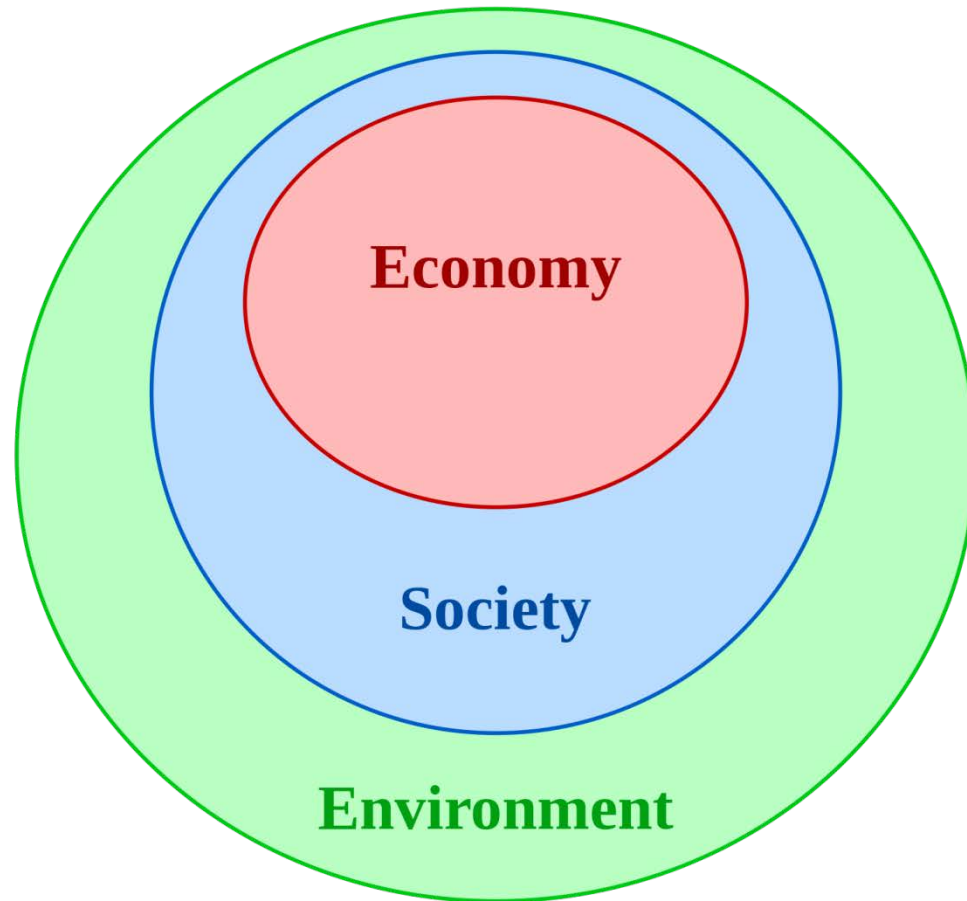# 'Sustainable Development' = balancing different *human* values

This produced 'Mickey Mouse' sustainability

And it hasn't stopped the destruction of the natural world

The solution – nested

Economy

Society

Environment

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Simple overview of GreenPrints

"All models are wrong, some models are useful"
(attributed to George Box)

The starting point

- Returning to our question: how can we create governance and legal systems that help us live within our ecological limits and support (not degrade) the living world
- A critical question then, is how (and where) do we set these limits? What scale?
- A useful starting point: bioregional ecological health, to set 'parameters' around human activities
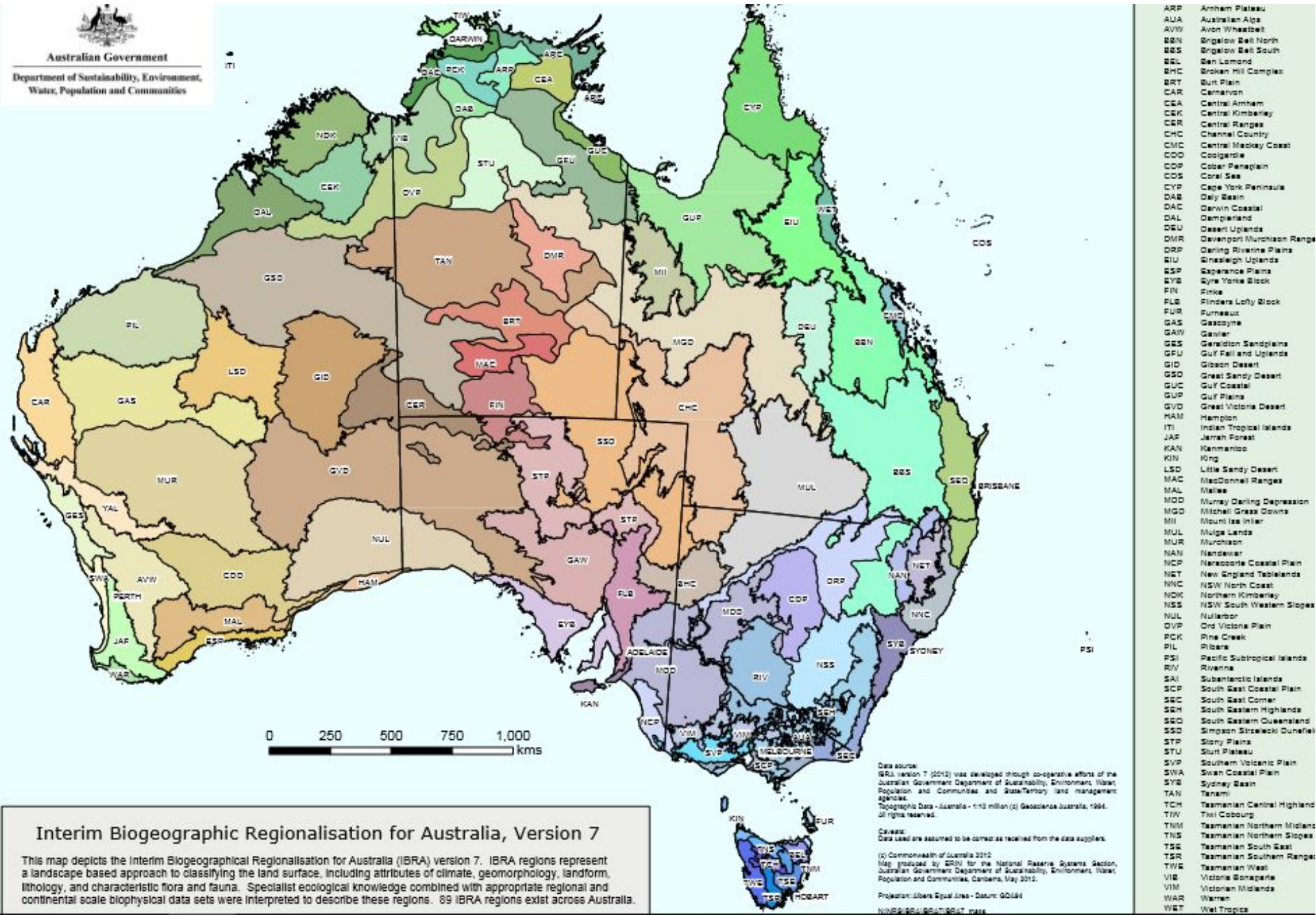
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What is a bioregion?

- a region defined by characteristics of the natural environment rather than by man-made divisions

- relatively large land areas characterised by broad, landscape-scale natural features and environmental processes that influence the functions of entire ecosystems.
  - These patterns in the landscape are linked to fauna and flora assemblages and processes at the ecosystem scale, thus providing a useful means for simplifying and reporting on more complex patterns of biodiversity.
  - (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage)

Australia has 89 bioregions

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419 sub-regions

Example of GreenPrints method: getting to know your own bioregion (eg: Riverina)

1. Practicing **ecocentric thinking**

2. Connecting with place/country

Starting with what we love
Home, place, country
Walking country
Maps, Arts, Creativity
Local knowledge
Connectedness

3. First Nations Peoples' law, culture, history contemporary work

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What does bioregional ecological health look like *in this place*?

r i v e r i n a

4. What does a healthy bioregion look like?

<u>**Need to engage with**</u> <u>**different knowledge systems**</u>
Indigenous knowledge
History
Natural sciences

<u>**Core issues**</u>
Waterways
Vegetation
Soils
Biodiversity

Scenarios for bioregional health

What does ecological health look like in this bioregion?

- Optimal
- Okay
- Unhealthy

Drawing in scenario planning experts, maps, artists

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Nesting human society within a healthy bioregion

5. How much space is left for human activity in our different scenarios?

Questions about our values; our choices

Population
Consumption
Space
Lifestyle
Culture
Education
Human health
Redefining the good life

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Create human economies that fit within social goals and eco-health
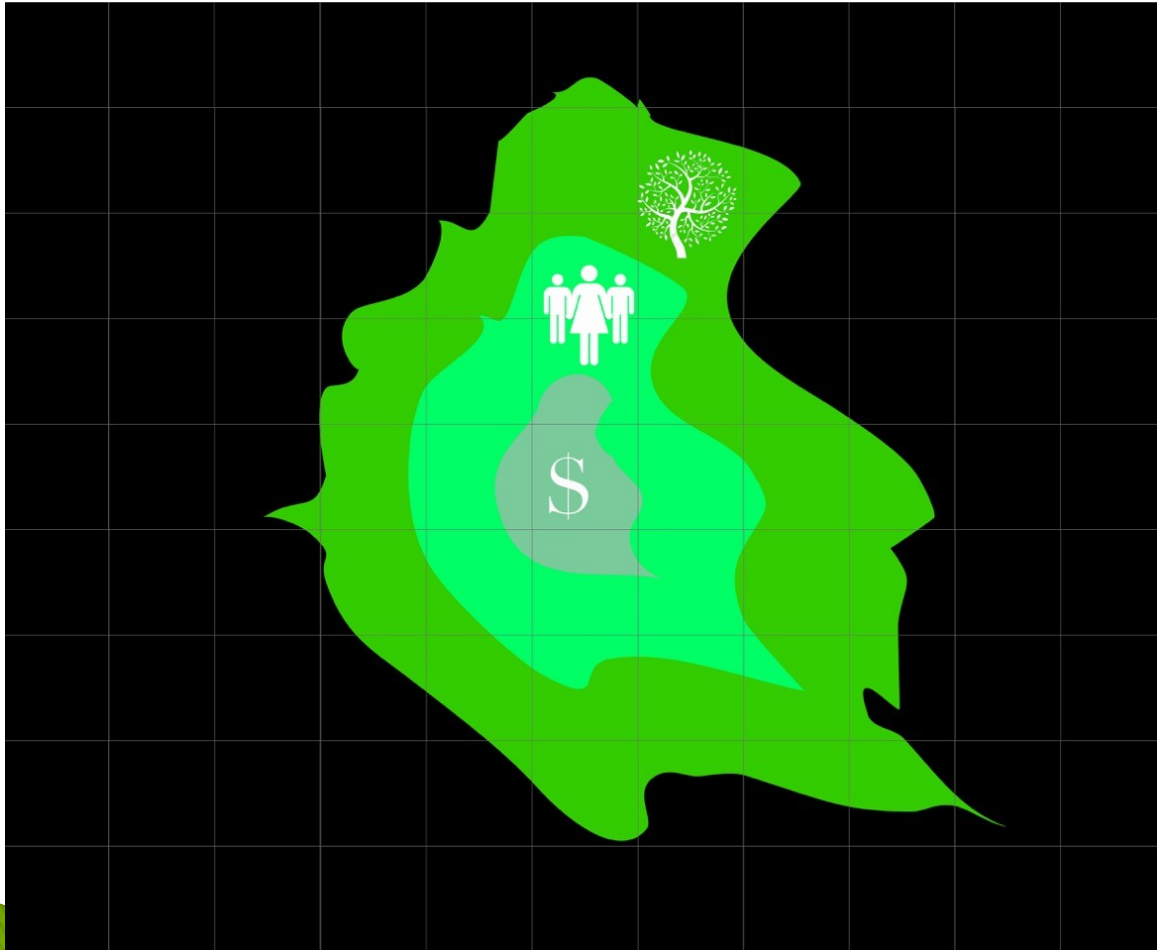
6. Economic activity

Steady State
Ecological economics
Regenerative economy

Questions
What does our healthy bioregion enable us to:
grow, water, eat cut down, import, farm, hunt

And how do we distribute it?

Social justice

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Bio-regional governance

7. 'Retrofitting' appropriate governance → laws, rules, ethics, institutions

Questions

How do we enshrine rules for healthy bio-regions into new governance?
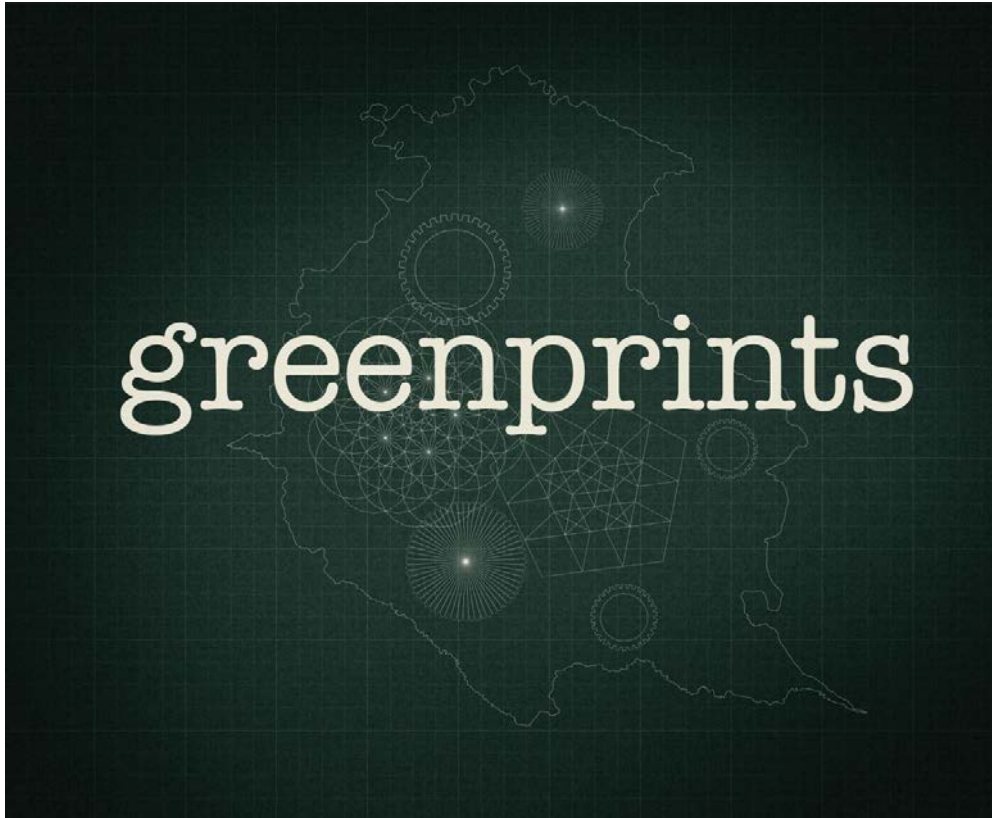
How can we work within existing local/state jurisdictions but focus on bioregional health

How do we connect bioregion health with N.Parks, protected area management and so on

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8 How do we make it all happen?

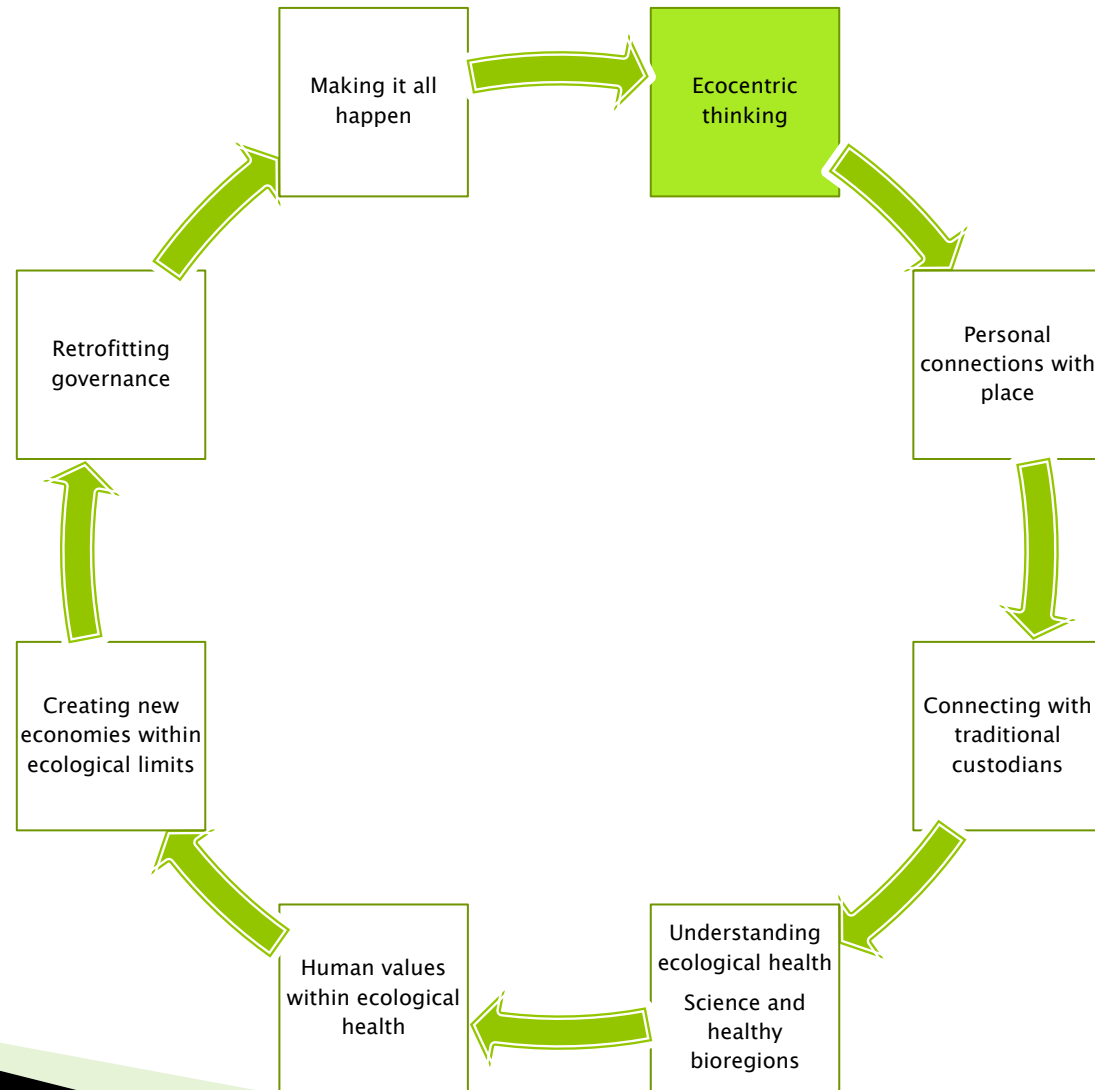Need to start somewhere

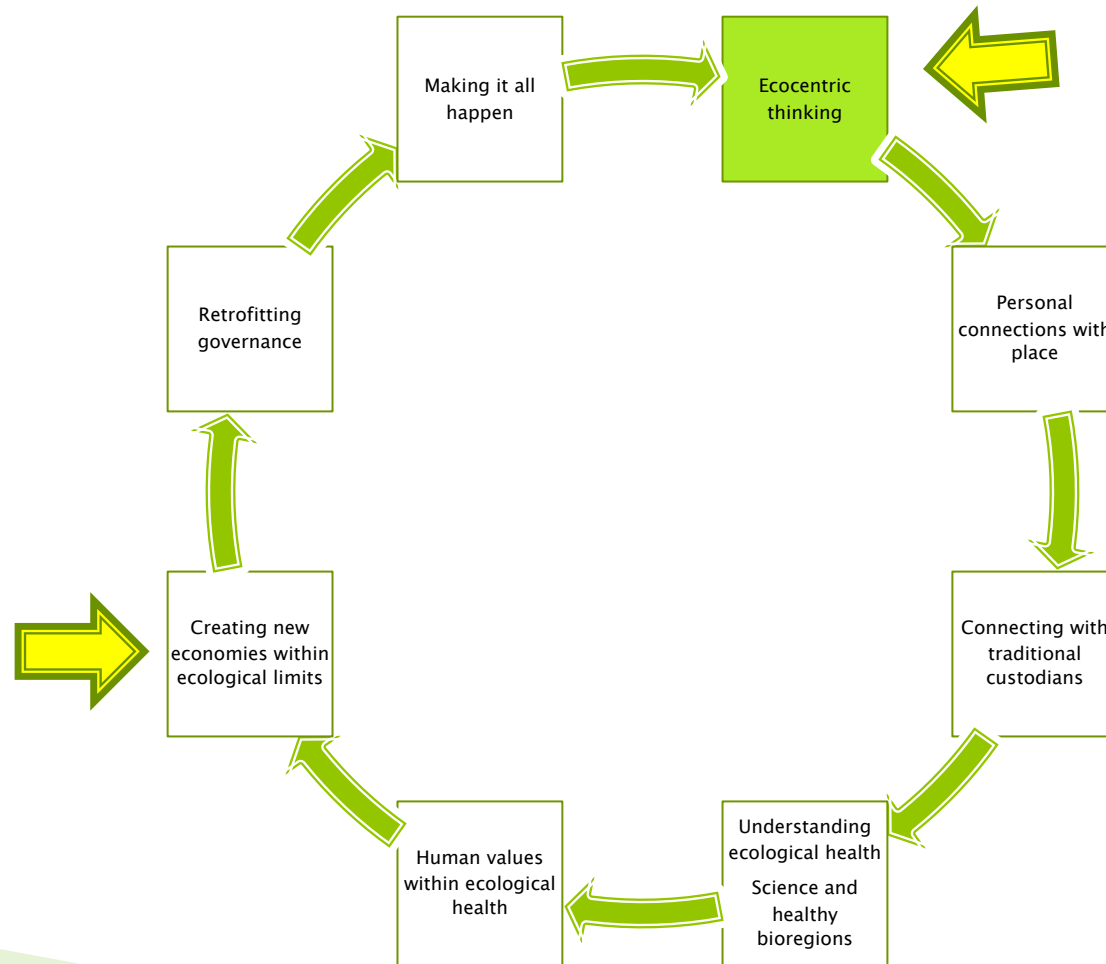People start from different places, all flows together

We can offer workshops/sessions/ mentoring:

- About ecocentrism
- Bioregional knowledge
- Connect with other initiatives
- Connect with existing NRM plans
- Map the scenarios
- Map the economic options
  Identify the 'tweakables'
- Identify the governance, systems and specific changes
- Identify advocacy and campaign work

GreenPrints as a pathway

Making it all happen

Ecocentric thinking

Personal connections with place

Connecting with traditional custodians

Understanding ecological health
Science and healthy bioregions

Human values within ecological health

Creating new economies within ecological limits

Retrofitting governance

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Can engage and begin

Invitation to get involved in GreenPrints

- Critique
- Comment
- Suggest
- Join up
- Tell others
- (give money ☺)

- convenor@earthlaws.org.au
- Thank you!

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Thank you for your time ☺

- Dr Michelle Maloney
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- AELA
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