

Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2017

The fifth SEFF took place on Saturday 24th June at Swanpool Cinema, following the same format since its inception i.e. three sessions each with a guest speaker and selected film. 174 people attended. It is organised by the Swanpool Landcare Group and the Benalla Sustainable Future Group, working in partnership. This year Benalla Permaculture also played an active role. We'd like to once again acknowledge the support of our sponsors: Gecko CLaN, Granite Creeks Landcare Network, GBCMA and Benalla Rural City (via a community grant to BSFG). Catering was provided by the Swanpool Catering Team and they did a superb job once again.

Attendance this year was 174 which was up on last year. People came from far and near for this event and they went home with much to think about after three films and three guest speakers, from 1 pm to 9.40 pm. We were very fortunate to have speakers of this calibre come to Swanpool. The films on offer this year were also exceptional.

This year our first speaker came to us courtesy of our Benalla Permaculture contacts. Dr Richard David Hames set the scene for the afternoon with his talk 'Burying the 20th Century'. The main message was that we need new solutions and strategic thinking to address present day problems. Existing systems are not set up to provide such solutions. The film 'the Age of Consequences' which followed gave powerful evidence for tackling the issues now. The USA military hierarchy agrees even if the President doesn't.

Following afternoon tea Julian Cribb took the stage to talk on 'Surviving the 21st Century', the title of his latest book. The title and the talk itself flowed on perfectly from Richard's theme. Lots of data was presented covering climate change, nuclear weapons, food security etc. plus solutions to tackle these issues. Will they be taken up by politicians and world bodies? Maybe not if the following film is any predictor - 'The Age of Stupid'. Starring Peter Postlethwaite in a future time it looks back from a devastated world on 'archival' footage and asks, as a human race, why didn't we do something?

Time for a break and lasagne dinner supplied by the Swanpool Catering Team. They received high praise for another tasty menu. Video footage drew people back to their seats, including some stunning wildlife photos from the next presenter set to music.

Professor Sharon Beder spoke on 'Business-Managed Democracy' with the talk starting out with slides of her own studies as an engineer on Sydney's sewerage outfall direct into the ocean. Despite attempts to prevent release of her findings they did get into the newspapers, triggering mass protests on Sydney's beaches. The talk went on to explain how news and public opinion is manipulated these days by social media. How then does the general populous hear what's happening and is it factual?

The final film 'The Bentley Effect' follows the successive misses and final successful blockade of gas rigs trying to drill in the Northern Rivers district of NSW. This led to a moratorium on fracking in NSW and in Victoria. Despite a democratic decision by these State parliaments, Federal ministers are still constantly applying pressure to let the rigs back in.

The final film 'The Bentley Effect' ended on a high and showed that people power and democracy can prevail in the end. Today a clear majority of people are in favour of more renewable energy and greater action on climate change yet our leaders procrastinate, argue and defer real action to avoid 'The Age of Stupid' as portrayed in the second film. If you missed the SEFF this year, please do come along next year.

Thanks to everybody who has contributed not just on the day but over the years to enable us to put on such events in Swanpool. The attendees from far and near went away better informed and revitalised to continue the fight for our environment and our children's future.

Ian Herbert



Swanpool Landcare
Granite Creeks
Landcare



Benalla
Sustainable
Future
Group



Benalla
Permaculture



GOULBURN
BROKEN
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

