

More people have their voices heard

IN this last month of summer, two events in Hobart highlight a widening, deepening awareness of what climate change will mean as this century wears on.

Climate justice is about ensuring that everyone has some protection from the most damaging impacts of climate change and the disruption that comes with building a sustainable society, while also being enabled to take an active part in that transformation.

Last week lawyers, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, the odd scientist and many other luminaries from across Australia and abroad

Hobart a hotspot for imagining a different future, says Peter Boyer

descended on Hobart for *Imagining a Different Future*, a symposium on climate justice hosted by the University of Tasmania

In the many years I've been writing about climate change I've attended countless conferences including some excellent ones on human health. But there have been

none quite like this, focusing on the ethics that underlie the reshaping of society by our changing climate

I hope there are more to come. *Imagining a Different Future* had important messages for all who want to get their heads around the barriers we face in responding to climate change, where concerns about justice and equity are repeatedly being drowned out by the deafening din of populism.

While it's true that politicians continue to ignore those who wrestle daily with climate issues, this was anything but a gathering of do-gooders wailing that no-

one is listening to them. Speaker after speaker emphasised that in this long, complex game everyone is responsible.

Collective responsibility was underlined in a public lecture by one of the conference's star guests, US political and environmental philosopher Steve Vanderheiden, author of the award-winning 2008 book *Atmospheric Justice*.

Like everyone else at last week's conference, I've struggled over the years to articulate to myself and others how an individual person should respond to the climate challenge. I've usually got

around the problem by asserting that the most effective response is to lobby politicians to act.

In his Hobart Town Hall presentation, Vanderheiden shifted the focus back to his audience — ordinary citizens wanting to do their bit. He pointed out that people refuse to engage with the climate issue, or become downright hostile about it, because objectives are too big and far away.

"What if our individual obligations had a different, more attainable objective?" he asked, and listed things that anyone can do with little effort which, added together,

amount to a great deal.

Things like reading, observing, listening, supporting science and professional journalism and government institutions, joining with others in co-operative effort, monitoring personal footprints, divesting from the carbon economy and above all, persevering.

Vanderheiden enjoined us to imagine a different future, and then live it.

This may not be music to the ears of your average ecowarrior, hungry for direct and decisive action, but it gets to the heart of the things that are holding us up. We will not win this battle by individual

on climate change

heroic effort, however welcome, but by collective acceptance of a different future.

For all that, we continue to need people to step up, speak up and make themselves heard above the din. Paul Hawken is a veteran ecowarrior who has been doing just that for many decades. Now he is putting all his considerable skill as a communicator into a new call to arms.

Climate justice doesn't get a mention in Hawken's new venture, *Drawdown*, touted as "the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming", yet it is

present on every page.

There's reason to be sceptical about the *Drawdown* blurb. It's not really a plan, but more a survey and analysis of plausible mitigation methods, and Hawken has been talking for many years about this stuff, to little apparent effect.

But to stop there would be to sell short this landmark achievement. With contributions from 70 distinguished experts, supported by countless more specialists, the book tackles the 100 key elements in getting atmospheric carbon dioxide down to safe levels as soon as humanly possible.

Each of the multiple

sections deals with a separate component, with a calculation in each case of what we can reasonably do to reduce emissions to a safe level by 2050 and, crucially, how much that action would cost and how much it would save in avoided damage.

But the book is far more than the sum of its parts. Meticulously edited by Hawken, it is above all a wonderful compendium of pretty well all we need to know about climate change and how to fix it.

Hawken is coming to Hobart to give the 2017 Richard Jones Memorial Lecture on Sunday week at

Stanley Burbury Theatre, University of Tasmania. The next day he will be guest at a luncheon at Mona, open to the paying public. RSVP for either at www.sit.org.au/events/

Tomorrow, Hobart City is seeking community input on its climate change strategy via two-hour Town Hall forums (11am and 6pm) and a drop-in afternoon session. Register on the Your Say Hobart website, email rsvp@hobartcity.com.au or phone 6238 2100.

Peter Boyer, who began his journalism career at the *Mercury*, specialises in the science and politics of climate change.

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