

# Centre For The Future

## ***Mindful Uprising*** – Newsletter #1 - July 2015

### OUR STORY

Give that Centre for the Future is both a local startup enterprise as well as the first node in a global ecosystem of such Centres, it is inevitable that things are happening quickly on many fronts. Steve Graham, our initial benefactor, has suggested that I keep you informed and in touch with our progress via an occasional newsletter. I have undertaken to author a short bulletin every few weeks to keep everyone informed of new developments, setbacks, relationships and ideas.

In most forums I attend the air is increasingly thick with a sense of learned hopelessness. This saps my energy. So when I come home I switch on the television, hoping to restore some degree of normality. But truth, hope and serenity are not to be found there. Nightly news bulletins and "reality shows" have become a bizarre blend of farce, partial truths, non-news, uncertain forecasts and sheer fantasy - a theatre of the absurd performed daily by politicians who have lost the plot, celebrities playing to the camera, pundits who repeat clichés ad infinitum, and commentators who shout at us in order to attract our attention.

From the puerile antics of our elected representatives, to the collapse of Greece, the predatory nature of *casino capitalism*, the covert nature of imperial power, unprecedented levels of surveillance by the state, hysterical fundamentalism, and the cynical quest for profits at any cost by many large multinational corporations, ordinary men and women like us are reeling from a lack of leadership. We are feeling lost, confused and angry - like children whose parents are suddenly abusing them. But we no longer have our heads in the sand. We are waking up - as various events, initiatives, movements and proposals testify.

From time to time we still try to pretend that nothing is wrong - or that whatever it is will get better soon. But in our heart of hearts we know that things we once took for granted no longer work. Humanity's most life-critical systems are damaged - some of them quite possibly beyond repair. Our collective hubris, greed and selfishness are largely to blame. This is where Centre for the Future can make a real difference. This is our niche and there is no better time for a *mindful uprising* of the human family. Now we must convince others. We have given ourselves 100 years to help shine a light on making the difference between a brighter future for everyone on the planet - or succumbing to a possible mass extinction.

I often use an extravagant vocabulary to explain my point of view. Some people find my prose overwhelming. But our mission is simple. It is to make life better for more people - today, tomorrow and for all future generations. We will help restore faith in the ingenuity and inventiveness of humanity by reimagining how things can be better - not by theorising but by designing and installing systems and practices that work for the benefit of humanity as a whole. And while we concede the complex nature of the problems we must overcome, and the opposition we will most likely face - the worldview progress has bequeathed us - we will refuse to cower in the shadows, mimic current practices, or wait for others to act.

The story we will tell through our activities will be one of defiance against the odds, of wise design, and determined hope - and of a refusal to submit to ignorance or stupidity.

## PLANNING

From 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> June I convened a small group [comprising our founding visionaries and *enablers*] to help clarify the Centre's purpose and to synthesise a High Level Design and strategy for our activities onto a single page. Steve Graham, Tim Galbally, Stuart McGregor, Laurent Labourmene, Roger Trask and myself worked intensively on this, skillfully assisted by Neil Houghton from the Holos Group. We also visited the CAVE2 at Monash University as a guest of Dr David Barnes, and welcomed Kevin DeSouza from the Decision Theater at Arizona State University who joined us in our discussions about the technology we will use.

The results of our planning week are beginning to bear fruit in a number of ways:

- The one-page High Level Design [HLD] is available upon request. It clarifies our vision, mission and grand challenges. Meanwhile the HLD is being used as an input to our strategic business planning process. This process uses an online application called *LivePlan* and is available to those parties interested in the granularity of our strategic direction.
- The HLD is also being used to help guide an identity and branding process that we kicked off this week. Simon Morris and Angelo Dracoulis from the creative design studio **elephant** are bringing their extensive knowledge of strategic design into this on a pro bono basis. We expect this process to be completed by the end of August. The output will be an IM [targeted at attracting potential investors in the Centre and/or its work] as well as a framework for some kind of online presence such as a website - the nature of which is still to be determined.
- Three source documents authored by myself with input from others and tracing the history of the key concepts informing Centre for the Future will be published and circulated to friends and close supporters at a soft launch of the Centre in early-mid September. These are not marketing documents but technical descriptions of the philosophy, methods, processes and techniques we will be using in establishing Centre for the Future and its international nodes.

## OUR HOME

After visiting CAVE2 it became obvious that our initial premises at 5 Hoddle Street would not be suitable even as a temporary home for the Centre.

In the immediate term we may look to a variety of alternatives including renting hot-desk space for workshops and meetings, and collaborating with David Barnes at Monash for when we need to bring groups into an immersive environment [as when curating the *wayfinding* experience using Transformational Narrative with clients or learning partners, for example]. David Barnes is very excited at the possibility this partnership offers Monash University and it negates the need for us to own and operate our own capital-intensive high-tech facility.

In the longer term we are talking to some amazingly enlightened people at ISPT to see if they can provide us with a Futures Foyer and Decision Theatre in one of the corporate buildings they own in the CBD. They are excited about developing a mutually-beneficial relationship with the Centre.

## INTERNATIONAL

Centre for the Future will only begin to fulfil its true strategic role when other similar Centres begin to collaborate as a kind of planetary brain. The strategy for our international work will be led by Roger Trask in the UK. Roger and I met in London on the weekend immediately following our planning meeting in Melbourne. We worked on a strategy for how to bring on international partners, focusing very much in these early days of nurturing relationships with those people who already know about Centre for the Future and appreciate the impact our work could have globally.

Collaborating with Kevin DeSouza at ASU and Maryland, Paul Lim from HamesMcGregor + Partners as an entrée to interested parties in Singapore, Sundeep Waslekar of the Strategic Foresight Group in Mumbai, and potentially Peter Abraam in Abu Dhabi, are currently occupying our thinking in terms of proposed development. Although this is a mixture of existing facilities and enterprises and those that would need to be built, our stretch target is to bring these partners, and others, into a global ecosystem of *wayfinding*.

## FUNDING

We are a startup. Like most startups we are running lean. Far too lean. Our priority must be to grow internal capability for without that we will continue to exist almost as a one-and-a-quarter-man band and without the capacity to do anything much. We expect to earn revenue via the work we do on our grand challenges. But we also need development funding to match the very generous seed funding we are already receiving.

The IM which is being produced by **elephant** on our behalf will also provide the means to communicate our story to potential sponsors. We are also exploring the possibility of attracting crowd funding at some stage. I will keep everyone updated on this issue.

## GRAND CHALLENGES

Centre for the Future is not a neutral think-tank or a passive agent. There is already far too much talk and insufficient action in the world. We have described a total of five foundation projects that will serve to showcase our capabilities and carve out a unique space vis-à-vis prototyping our overarching purpose and beliefs.

We are now looking for project partners who can bring explicit systemic issues into focus and/or who can provide the necessary funding for us to undertake the work. The first projects to get off the ground are likely to be these. In each case we will work within the CAVE2 facility at Monash.

**1. What it Means to be Human** is our source project intent on studying the civilisational *worldview* and its constraints while discovering new rules, values and practices that are desirable in order to create a more viable and equitable world-system. We need to find financial backing for this project and will be inviting friends to contribute to whom this topic would have explicit appeal from a new paradigm viewpoint.

**2. Democracy Rebooted** explores ways to enable citizens to participate more fully and more wisely in the processes of policy-making at all levels in society. The goal of the project is to bring fresh integrity and variety to the process of governing the modern city and state. I have had initial conversations with Jan Owen from the Foundation for Young Australians and Adam Jacoby from HamesMcGregor + Partners [who has a specific model of participative democracy that simply needs prototyping effort] and we will be convening a small forum of

like-minded people in August to explore how we might expedite progress in order to prototype the model in the next election for the Australian Senate in 2016.

**3. The Real Future of Work** identifies what assumptions and belief systems must change, how, and why, given the tectonic changes in the 400-year-old wage-labour paradigm and the mass extinction of traditional jobs that will occur through the introduction of next generation technologies. The focusing question will shine the spotlight on the new social contract needed as we move into an age where work becomes a privilege rather than the norm and the term *career* becomes irrelevant. We are looking forward to undertaking this project in collaboration with Melbourne Polytechnic.

## GOVERNANCE

Steve Graham organised a meeting between himself, his accountant Greg Kennedy and our friend (but as yet unofficial legal counsel) Peter Tunjic on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July. At that meeting it was determined Centre for the Future should seek B Corp status as a “for-profit” entity. I understand the business name will be registered and an ABN and a bank account established as soon as possible.

Although we are determined to implement a unique governance model as soon as possible – with Stewards and Custodians acting as a Board of Directors – Peter Tunjic has advised keeping the formalities as simple as possible at this stage. Consequently we will be instituting a small Board including myself as an interim measure. We hope to be able to announce members in the next newsletter.

## MORE INFORMATION

We are about to publish two seminal documents. These will be available upon request from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015 and will be of interest to those people who would like to explore our unique mission in far greater detail.

*The Wayfinder Guidebook* attempts to answer the main questions people ask about Centre for the Future. It describes our unique *wayfinding* experience, the new dialogical method we are using to trigger metanoia, and the nature of our philosophical activism. It also explains why our approach to prototyping whole systems as a renewal activity is so critical at this juncture.

The great inventor Richard Buckminster Fuller insisted that *in order to change an existing paradigm you do not struggle to try and change the problematic model. You create a new model and make the old one obsolete.* *Mindful Uprising* is a description of our operating system and explains, step by step, how we intend rising to that challenge by using the wayfinding experience to change peoples’ minds about what it means to be human.

*Richard Hames*

Chief Executive  
Centre for the Future  
22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015