



SCIENCE MATTERS

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There are currently a multitude of scientific and community debates surrounding many diverse issues such as global warming, sea level change, the ozone layer and therapeutic cloning to name but a few. Community concerns over

these issues, and the failure of science to respond to these questions in a manner that is easily digestible, let alone comprehensible to the layperson, is a major cause for disquiet.

While certainly not the first to raise these issues, recent documentaries including Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' have nevertheless elevated some of these issues to a level of community consciousness not seen previously. These days when I'm introduced to people as an environmental scientist, no longer do I encounter the blank stare and awkward 'that must be interesting.....what do you actually do?' response; nowadays a spontaneous outburst of dissatisfaction, cries of frustrated anguish, and quietly spoken, seriously worded questions greet the announcement of my vocation.

So, what is the problem? Why can't scientists just tell us what's going on? Why, if we know what the problem is, why can't we just fix it? Why does there appear to be so much misinformation, disinformation and just plain, garden variety confusion surrounding these debates?

The vexatious answer is that there is rarely an absolute solution, and almost certainly there is no 'easy fix' - further, many times the answer is that we simply do not know. There appears to be a great emphasis placed on how much we know, as we wrap ourselves in a cosy blanket of technological and cultural superiority over Earth's other endemic species.

For example, how many times have you heard that humankind doubles their sum total of knowledge every five to ten years? I guess it's easy to achieve that when we know very little to begin with! To place this 'fact' in context, consider the following:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates there are up to 10,000 species of plants, and 50,000 species of arthropods yet to be classified in Queensland alone.
- Science has so far described and catalogued less than 0.1% of micro-organisms.
- We have reliable, direct observations that cover a mere 0.000000005% of the Earth's history.
- Of about 400 billion star systems in our galaxy alone, we have explored a tiny part of *one* of them.

So, lets start at the beginning - what is the problem? Apart from the vast expanse of ignorance that exists between what we know and what we aspire to know, there are many potential reasons (dare I say excuses?).

These include the complexity of the actual science surrounding the issues and the heavy use of jargon, which exacerbates the community's perception of the elitism and exclusivity within the scientific 'club', the conservatism of the scientific establishment and their resistance to new ideas; the insistence of the media to oversimplify, and their proclivity to condense issues into ten second / single paragraph sound bites; differing attitudes, opinions and agendas of certain stakeholder groups, and the adversarial climate this generates; the (somewhat understandable) apathy of some in the community only concerned with surviving through the next week...

So, as a tiny, yet hopefully not completely insignificant attempt to address these problems, the editorial staff at the Montville Times have asked me to provide some scientific insight into these issues and hopefully, to cast some light on some critical issues of interest to everyone.

Do you have a question regarding any aspect of science? Send it to monttimes@bigpond.net.au



Who's Who on the Range...

Since local artist Joy Moran was a child, she dreamt of travelling the world and sharing her love of art with the public. Joy has pursued this lifelong desire and has in fact moved house more than forty times, thirty of these with her husband Tony.

"After living on Moreton Island for a year, Tony and my family moved to the Sunshine Coast hinterland area," said Joy. "I now work from my studio which is set on 350 acres of farmland in the Obi Obi Valley."

Joy has an extensive art-related background with the completion of a graphic arts course in 1984, followed by ten years spent working in the advertising industry.

"I took a break from my career to raise my children and when I returned, the technology and techniques being used were completely different. I guess the changes inspired me to leave the advertising industry and concentrate on finer artwork - messy and much more hands-on involvement!"

Joy went on to open the 'Purple Monkeys' studio in Brisbane where she ran children's and adult's workshops that opened her eyes to the different aspects of art.

"It really taught me to appreciate art and to encourage and celebrate it's diversity," said Joy.

"I really enjoy using bright colours and bold lines and find inspiration in a whole variety of subjects, but particularly enjoy depicting the human body."

When Joy, her husband Tony and her children moved from Moreton Island to the farm, the house was just a small cottage. Many rooms have been added and extended since then and the latest renovation - Joy's studio - is the current project. (She thanks her son for this opportunity after he drove a car through the back wall of her gallery. Luckily, there was no major damage to the artwork or her son!)

The Moran farm is home to cattle and a variety of other animals, as well as plantation trees. Joy particularly loves spring time when the new calves are born, even though it means a lot more work for the family.



Joy Moran

"We have now lived in the Obi Valley home for the past six years which is the longest I think we have stayed anywhere! We just love it here and we still have so many plans for the development of the property."

Joy hopes to share her beautiful home with the public by opening some form of accommodation to host people interested in art workshops or team-building weekends.

"We already dabble in the hospitality industry here on the range - renting our Mapleton Falls units to tourists."

"It is a pleasure and I find it a nice balance, taking time out to greet holiday-makers who come to enjoy the wonders of the area, along with my creative pursuits."

"Art is certainly my passion however. I was discouraged by my high school teachers to seriously consider art as a vocation but I followed my dream anyway, and I am happy with what I have achieved. I still have many goals left to fulfill and now just hope to find enough time to see them all through."

I would encourage any artist to pursue a career in art. Really, just go for it. Create pieces that you enjoy and don't worry too much about what other people might think of it. People will always form their own opinions about art - it is very personal. The most important thing is to be true to your self."



Montville's Dancing in the Streets!

Earthly Desires, located at the Pottery Centre in Montville, are treating visitors and locals to exotic, ethnic treats including Turkish and Moroccan teas and world music every weekend.

"It is a custom we enjoy sharing with shoppers," said Kelly. "Once a month we also invite Shamara - resident Belly Dancer to come and perform. She has a knack of enticing just about everyone, old and young to try a few moves."

Moroccan and turkish artifacts, tajines, traditional spices, cook books, fabrics, and a myriad of other casual decorator items can all be found amongst the exotic treasures and entertainment at Shop 9, the Pottery Centre (opposite the information centre in Main St Montville). Phone 5478 5765.

EARTHLY DESIRES

Shop 9, The Pottery Phone 5478 5765

- decorator items and giftware
- moroccan / turkish pottery
- belly dancing accessories
- tajines and spices

Indulgence of montville

- scent chip wax melts
- estate jewellery
- emu oil products
- bric-a-brac

5478 5738
Shop 8, The Pottery, Main Street