

## Environmental Justice Symposium - World Café (27 July 2012)

### Topic 5 - An Australian Environmental Justice movement – where will it come from, who will be involved and what might its activities be?

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#### Discussion points

1. Existing movements/groups where an environmental justice (**EJ**) movement might spring from or who might be open to engaging in EJ issues:
  - a. Local groups (such as the toxic waste dump groups or climate action groups)
  - b. Children and high school students
  - c. Environmental groups (such as Friends of the Earth)
  - d. Human rights groups
  - e. Rural communities (who are already very engaged in activism against issues such as coal seam gas)
  - f. Unions
  - g. Indigenous groups
  - h. Women
  - i. The Greens political party
2. Does a movement have to specifically identify as an 'EJ movement'? Or can it be a diffuse 'orchestra' model (different voices combining together into a powerful symphony), for example groups linked by their common interest in and support for EJ principles?
3. It is thought that Australia has a strong environment movement that is very 'eco-centric' and not human focussed. There is a present but weak social movement.
4. There are thoughts that environmental protection interests and EJ interests won't always align, and that the concepts of EJ are human-centric and to a large extent ignore 'rights for nature'. Some are uncomfortable with this and there needs to be a way to incorporate both. This tension will need to be addressed if existing environmental groups are to play a leading role in a movement.
5. Strengthening the human rights movement in Australia will naturally further the objectives of EJ. This movement is small but is already engaged in issues of fairness, equality, disadvantage and its reach is arguably broader and younger.
6. EJ is thought to be a good way of engaging those who have a strong social justice compass but don't consider themselves to be 'green'.
7. Attempts should be made to engage young people such as high school students in EJ. Youth relate to issues of 'fairness' and have time and capacity to engage in these issues. They are also currently not listened to enough and are disempowered.
8. It was questioned whether there needs to be a whole separate EJ movement with a defining EJ ideology, or whether EJ can just be used as a communications approach.
9. It is thought that currently in Australia, it is only those in the climate change movement that are using social justice issues in their advocacy, and that this needs to be expanded. There is too much focus on climate change within the environment movement, and
10. Ideas for creating traction around the concept of EJ:
  - a. Through forming networks to work on the issue – the idea that interested people within organisations can act as the 'cheese' to stick everything (and everyone) together.
  - b. Encouraging a grass roots movement to form
  - c. It is important to start communicating around environmental justice explicitly