



Dick Smith's Wilberforce Award - Endless Growth is Not Sustainable

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[Dick Smith](#) is a famous Australian, an entrepreneur, aviator and well regarded 'good guy' who was honoured with the 'Australian of the Year' award in 1986. Until recently, he was not prominent in the environmental movement or the sustainability debate. But over the last year he appears to have had an 'epiphany' and is now running a crusade on 'the population debate' and slowly (not too fast to scare anyone) linking the dots with the consumption and availability of fossil fuels. He has vigorously pushed the population debate in Australia over the last six months, under the banner of "[Dick Smith's Population Puzzle](#)". His new documentary is available to [watch online](#) for another week.

Now, he has launched the 'Wilberforce Award', a prize for a young person under 30 anywhere in the world who gets publicity and raises awareness of the fact (old news to many here) that 'endless growth is not sustainable'. The prize.. **ONE MILLION (Australian) DOLLARS**.

[Dick Smith's Wilberforce Award](#)

It has become obvious to me that my generation has over exploited our wonderful world - and it's younger people who will pay the price. Like many people my age, I've benefited from a long period of constant economic and population growth - we are addicted to it. But sooner or later this consumption growth will have an end. We appear to be already bumping against the limits of what our planet can sustain and the evidence is everywhere to see.

Right now I believe we could be sleepwalking to catastrophe because we are failing to both acknowledge that there are limits to growth in a finite world and to prepare for a more sustainable way of organising our economy.

In the 19th Century, empires were built on the labour of slaves, and it was believed economies would collapse if slavery was abolished. But brave people like William Wilberforce fought to end the slave trade - and economies still flourished. We need brave people like Wilberforce today, and I want to encourage a new generation of clear-thinking and inspiring young leaders.

So today I am announcing Dick Smith\'s Wilberforce Award – \$1 million to go to a young person under 30 who can impress me by becoming famous through his or her ability to show leadership in communicating an alternative to our population and consumption growth obsessed economy. I will be looking for candidates whose actions over the next year show that they have what it takes to be among the next generation of leaders our incredible planet so badly needs.

Candidates will need to have a firm belief that we can have a viable and strong world economy that is no longer obsessed with growth for its own sake, but instead encourages both a stable population and sustainable consumption of energy and resources. They must be able to communicate that we cannot continue to squander the resources that will be needed by future generations, and they must also be able to communicate a plan that offers an alternative to our growth addiction.

Like the Nobel Prize, you will not apply for the Wilberforce Award. Over the next twelve months I will be following the media throughout the world to see who is the most outstanding individual in not only making a significant contribution to this important issue, but who also becomes famous through his or her contribution to the debate.

One year from now I will announce the winner of the \$1 Million Wilberforce Award. The Award will go towards advancing the momentum the winner will have already achieved.

Dick Smith
11 August 2010

Too bad I'm over 30 :-)



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