



## Blacktown Solar City

■ In July, the Federal Government's Solar Cities initiative kicked off with a launch in the Western Sydney suburb of Blacktown. A large and growing population, coupled with widespread air conditioner use, makes it an ideal participant. Consortium members include Blacktown City Council, BP Solar and Integral Energy.

A range of photovoltaic packages, some including solar hot water systems, are available to local residents and businesses at heavily discounted prices. Taking into account the \$8,000 federal photovoltaic rebate program, the cost of a one-kilowatt system has been slashed from around \$16,000 to only \$5,000.

The project, which includes free energy efficient lightbulb packs and energy audits, is expected to save 25,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually once complete. Environment groups however, would like to see broader support for solar power sold to the grid, through the introduction of 'feed-in tariffs.'

**Resources: Blacktown Solar City**  
**Ph: 1800 619 322**  
**Web: [www.blacktownsolarcity.com.au](http://www.blacktownsolarcity.com.au)**



## Canola Controversy

■ Australian cultivation of GE canola is currently banned in all grower states under moratoria. In Victoria, the four-year ban is due to expire in February 2008, and the Victorian Farmers Federation is lobbying for it to be lifted. President Simon Ramsay believes that GE canola is safe.

However, Greenpeace and Gene Ethics are running a campaign urging Victorian Agriculture Minister Joe Helper to retain the ban. They see canola as a significant crop because in addition to the oil, canola meal is used for feeding dairy herds.

Bob Phelps of Gene Ethics believes that the segregation of GE and non-GE canola has failed overseas. Australia's two major canola competitors, the US and Canada, have both gone GE. If Australia follows suit, it might lose its competitive advantage.

Approved varieties include Monsanto's Roundup Ready Canola, which has been banned for human consumption in Austria.

**Resources: Gene Ethics**  
**[www.geneethics.org](http://www.geneethics.org)**



## Confirmation of the ADHD/Vaccination link?

■ A recently released survey indicates a strong correlation between rates of neurological disorders, such as ADHD and autism, and childhood vaccinations. The survey, commissioned by Generation Rescue compared vaccinated and unvaccinated children in nine counties in Oregon and California. Among more than 9,000 boys age 4-17, the survey found vaccinated boys were two and a half times (155%) more likely to have neurological disorders compared to their unvaccinated peers. Vaccinated boys were 224% more likely to have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and 61% more likely to have autism.

For older vaccinated boys in the 11-17 age bracket, the results were even more pronounced. Vaccinated boys were 158% more likely to have a neurological disorder, 317% more likely to have ADHD, and 112% more likely to have autism. Generation Rescue commissioned the phone survey. Data was gathered by SurveyUSA, a national market

research firm which surveyed parents by phone on more than 17,000 children, ages 4-17, in five counties in California (San Diego, Sonoma, Orange, Sacramento, and Marin) and four counties in Oregon (Multnomah, Marion, Jackson, and Lane).

**For more info or complete survey results visit: [www.GenerationRescue.org](http://www.GenerationRescue.org)**

## The Cultural Gates take on Obesity!

■ The University of Sydney has announced the formation of a new high level research centre which will tackle the obesity epidemic with an unprecedented expert collaborative group based in Sydney, Australia. The Institute of Obesity, Nutrition & Exercise will draw together some of Australia's leading researchers, scientists and academics in four key divisions; Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise, and Public Health, Epidemiology and Policy. The Institute will take a leading role in the battle to control the global obesity epidemic and lifestyle-related chronic diseases by providing a focus for advancing basic and clinical research, public health and policy development.

The Institute will be based within the existing Medical Foundation Building of the University of Sydney campus at 92-94 Parramatta Road, Camperdown. The University hopes to attract financial partners to contribute to the development of the infrastructure.

**Mission statement:** The Institute of Obesity, Nutrition & Exercise will be a world and regional leader in expanding the understanding of obesity, and the role of nutrition and exercise in improving health and combating the lifestyle-related epidemic of chronic disease, through research, prevention, better management, and policy development.  
**Email: [medfac-news-contacts@med.usyd.edu.au](mailto:medfac-news-contacts@med.usyd.edu.au)**



# Personal Sovereignty or 1984?

**Our Health:** Is the TGA helping or hindering our journey to better health? Is protection, censorship and control the way? Who will make the necessary investment in nutraceuticals and superfoods to satisfy the regulatory bodies? Pharmaceutical corporations? Governments?

by Sudha Hamilton

I think to begin this topic we need to define what "health" actually is. What is health?

1. The state of being well in body or mind.
2. A person's mental or physical condition.
3. Soundness, esp. financial or moral." (Aust Concise Oxford Dictionary)

Health is most often defined negatively as an absence of disease, and this is probably closer to the paradigm that encapsulates the modern health system in this country. I think we, as a community, need to find a more comprehensive and sophisticated definition of health before we can actually move to a state of overall greater health. A better definition I came across is this one from the nursing dept at a training institute in the United States:

"Health is a unity and harmony within the mind, body and spirit which is unique to each person, and is as defined by that person. The level of wellness or health is, in part, determined by the ability to deal with and defend against stress. Health is on a continuum with movements between a state of optimum well-being and illness which is defined as degrees of disharmony. It is determined by physiological, psychological, socio-cultural, spiritual, and developmental stage variables."

I particularly like the reference in this definition to the "uniqueness" of each person and the encompassing acceptance of health as a continuum, moving between different states at various stages of our lives. The more that we can move to respecting and treating the health of each individual, rather than basing our health policy on generalised statistical medicine, the greater satisfaction we all will draw from our health system. Our doctors and health administrators need to stop treating us like cattle; we are not bodies without minds or souls. It is the narrowly defined "universality," in the laws of science, which has, in my opinion, condemned modern western medicine to always treat the body not the person. Why does an effective treatment always have to be reduced down to what works for everybody or at least a majority of "bodies?" The lowest common denominator will always be precisely that - the lowest. Why can't we look with more inclusive eyes at the amazing variety of people and their responses to

various treatments, be they nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals or so called superfoods?

The increasingly aggressive standpoint of the Australian government's Therapeutics Goods Administration in challenging health claims made by those in the business of selling these natural substances can be partially understood as a means to protect certain vulnerable sections of the community, those who are sick with terminal and incurable conditions that do not readily respond to those treatments proffered by our doctors and hospitals, and who may be swayed by the testimonials of others who have cured themselves through diet and directly or indirectly through the consumption of a particular natural substance. Therefore, perhaps avoiding treatments recommended by the state in favour of a more natural approach, that may or may not shorten their life expectancy.

This protection for a small minority of people, through strictly enforced censorship based on the premise of science's lowest common denominator, condemns the rest of the community to ignorance of the health benefits of these substances. Why? Because it is money in our capitalistic economies that drives information, education and research and if these natural health manufacturers and distributors cannot advertise their products then they cannot sell them, and the information dries up. It also reduces the task of sharing new health discoveries the province of big companies, due to resulting expense. Do I personally think the majority of Australian businesses involved in selling health supplements genuinely believe that their products contribute to creating better health for those in the community that purchase and use them? In my experience I would say yes. Of course there is also always a small number of business people who exploit demand without a view to the totality of consequences in their pursuit of profits, like the owners of the Pan Pharmaceutical Company who were suspended by the TGA in 2003. However one rotten apple does not make the whole apple industry shonky. We need to be careful that greater regulation does not choke the creativity out of the natural health industry and leave it in the hands of a few with enormous vested interests.

The current lack of definitive western scientific proof for many of the health

claims made by many of the people involved in selling things like Goji juice and berries, is due, I think, to a combination of circumstances. Firstly it is a relatively new phenomenon here in the west, and there has not really been the necessary time or money for trials. Secondly, a general disinterest by the medical/scientific fraternity in testing natural substances, when there is far more money to be made in the development of artificial pharmaceuticals, which can be copyrighted for exclusive income generation. And who funds most trials? Pharmaceutical Companies. This lack of investment in nutritional science also leads to relatively poor levels of understanding about this field and question marks over whether the right queries are being framed in studies into these substances. This brings us back to timing, and the fact that we are on the threshold of an exciting new era of nutritional understanding and its impact on our quality of life.

Can we empower people to take responsibility for their own health? Does the existing established medical fraternity want people to take back that power? Is it happening anyway in some sort of quiet revolution? All questions that arise when I am faced with this ongoing conundrum about whether a superfood is really that or in fact more snake oil, as many of our health legislators would have us all believe. Let's be blunt, many doctors still think that taking vitamin supplements are a waste of time and money. Self-interest drives much of our world, be it in health or elsewhere, the question is who is driving the TGA? Is it medical experts who have had much of their research funded by pharmaceutical companies? Do we want to end up with a few vitamin giants supplying our supplement market, who are in fact owned by pharmaceutical corporations? This is pretty much where we are now in this country. Is big business always going to sell us the "good oil?" And where are our passionate modern "shamen" going to put their healing knowledge and energy now? Lots of interesting questions that we all could be asking our elected representatives in the days ahead. It will be fascinating to see how things continue to unfold and where the power will reside in the ongoing maintenance of our health. ■