

On 4 May 2009, a group of young Australians were invited by the Office of the Chief Scientist to consider plausible futures that Australia could face over the next 50 years. These are some of the outcomes of their brainstorming.

“Imagine a world in which.....”

PREFERRED	DISASTROUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australia rapidly transitions away from fossil fuels and becomes the world leader in developing and implementing sustainable technologies• Innovation in science and technology is Australia’s key export, with science seen as our greatest national responsibility• Working in a ‘green collar’ job is considered more attractive than other sectors• Decentralised energy generation, with every rooftop generating power, and stringent sustainable building standards combine to make Australia the nation with the world’s highest level of energy security• Urban sprawl is restricted, reducing dependence on cars and preserving valuable suburban farmland• Advances in network technologies allow more people to work from home, reducing transport costs and emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efforts to curb climate change come too late to prevent the Earth’s climate systems passing important tipping points• Worldwide problems such as climate change, poverty, food security and the economic crisis converge, resulting in social breakdown and global conflicts• Quality education is both expensive and culturally unattractive, so only the fortunate few pursue it• Carbon capture and storage technologies do not work, despite substantial investment• Australia has the world’s highest obesity rates, with associated effects on cardiovascular disease and higher burdens on our health system• The economy is continually given more importance than innovation on climate change, resulting in worst-case climate scenarios