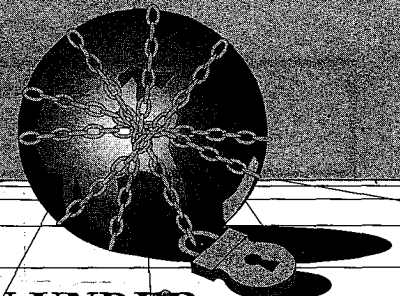


# GROUND SWELL

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## TWO WEEKS IN THE LAND DOWN UNDER

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By Edward Dodson, Cherry Hill, NJ

I suspect that many readers of GroundSwell would greatly enjoy visiting the beautiful cities and exotic parts of Australia and New Zealand. After years contemplating just such a trip, my wife Deb and I finally were able to set aside enough time to make the long journey.



We flew from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, then began a 16-hour flight to Melbourne. Upon arrival, we joined 30 others from the U.S. and the Caribbean for a guided tour that began in Melbourne, took us to the Great Barrier Reef, to Sydney, then to the south island of New Zealand, to Auckland on the north island, and finally back to the United States.

While in Melbourne, I had the great opportunity to visit with our colleagues at Prosper Australia. Karl Fitzgerald arranged for me to give a talk on the meaning of "Geo-Libertarianism," which he live streamed and later made available on the website of Prosper Australia. My approach was to present the history of the divergent perspectives of those who embraced Henry George's solution to the land problem. There has always been a tension between those attracted to the libertarian right and those attracted to the progressive left.

Karl Fitzgerald and I were joined by Phil Anderson at one of the local pubs near our hotel. And, in the afternoon, Neil Gilchrist, a Georgist I met back in 2001 at the International Union conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, arrived. Neil, Deb and I got on one of the free trams that run through much of the city, leaving the tram for a short walk to the Prosper Australia office. Neil had seen an email notice that I was to speak at Prosper Australia and flew in from Sydney for the event. He is retiring from his professional work and intends to devote time to putting the Georgist solutions before influential persons in Sydney.

Others, including Bryan Kavanagh, joined us at the Prosper Australia office for some informal discussion. Karl recorded for his Renegade Economist radio program a roundtable conversation between Karl, Neil, Emily Sims (Prosper Australia's office manager) and me.

After two days in Melbourne, we flew to the tropical City of Cairnes, where we were taken by boat out to the Great Barrier Reef. The day was rainy and the seas choppy, which prevented us from seeing any of the reef. It felt good to get back onto dry land.

Our next stop was Sydney, where we enjoyed a bus tour of a city characterized by great views of the harbor from the top of the city's many hills. Our trip also included a guided tour of the Opera house. On our last day in Sydney, Deb and I enjoyed a relaxing lunch with Neil Gilchrist, David Smiley and their wives. After Sydney, we flew to the south island of New Zealand, to the resort community of Queenstown. The south island is mostly rural, with sheep and cattle ranches covering the valleys between the island's high mountain ranges. After a three-hour bus ride to a fiord and a boat ride past the fiord's many waterfalls, we returned to Queenstown.

Our next and final stop was Auckland, on New Zealand's north island. We had no opportunity to meet with any remaining Georgists, unfortunately. Auckland is a much larger city than we thought was the case. As is Melbourne, Sydney (and most other Australian cities), Auckland's population is growing rapidly. One thing happened worth mentioning. A chance encounter with a TV reporter resulted in a short interview on how to fund infrastructure needed to improve water quality and prevent pollution of the nation's beaches. This was broadcast the next evening.

What every location we visited had in common was the skyrocketing price of real estate. My discussions with people who worked in the hotels and restaurants confirmed just how difficult it is for them to find decent, affordable housing in the cities. Let us hope our colleagues in Australia will be successful in their efforts to replace the nation's existing taxes with a strong, annual charge on land values (or, if one prefers, on the potential annual rental value of all locations).

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