

Greg Mackie ([00:00:00](#)):

Thanks. Very much ladies and gentlemen, what a fantastic classic Adelaide mid spring, Saturday afternoon rug up, stripped down, get ready to rug up a guy. And hi, my name is Greg Mackie. I'm the chair of the board of the Adelaide festival of ideas. And it's my very great pleasure to welcome you all this afternoon for what promises to be a most interesting conversation. I'm here to do the necessary housekeeping matches. There's been a couple of changes in the program, and if you've just come in this afternoon for the emphasis, your first session, you might've heard this Marion Terrell who's listed in our printed big program has had to cancel her participation. And so that 4:00 PM session at elder hall has been canceled indie Joe Hart, who was to be presenting at the open state hub, had to cancel yesterday for family reasons.

Greg Mackie ([00:01:04](#)):

And so what we're doing is we're bringing forward to that slot 10 Tim Dunlop's session, which had previously been programmed following that at the hits or so at four o'clock, you can catch tin Dunlop at the Idaho. And of course you can catch Barry Jones here at 4:00 PM. Now I'm going to spare you over the long and necessary but long acknowledgments. And simply to recognize in particular, in relation to this session that we're grateful to open state and the government of south Australia for making Erin Brockovich has participation possible. And I particularly want to acknowledge and thank Gallo felon and Sharon McKay from the department of premier and cabinet for their assistance in in facilitating errands of visit to Adelaide. I really don't have anything else to do other than to recognize that our festival of ideas dedicatee Phillip Adams who is no stranger to any of you here is about to bring you a little wireless program.

Greg Mackie ([00:02:18](#)):

And I would ask you to please make welcome Phillip Adams and his special guest Erin Brockovich, welcome to the Adelaide festival of ideas and also to the wildest program called lake, not live on the ABCs are in very few of us are honored with an eponymous moving. It helps if you were a hero, if you're a bin, her or a Spartacus, Joan of arc, or an Erin Brockovich, the film made way back in the year, 2000 told the world of Aaron's work to expose the contamination of community drinking water, you know, hometown of Hinckley in California. And it resulted in the largest financial settlement ever paid out in a direct action lawsuit in us history. Ever since that containment chromium six has been associated with Aaron's name. And just to recap, it was used to prevent corrosion in the cooling towers of the Hinckley compressor station, where a wastewater leaked into the groundwater.

Greg Mackie ([00:03:41](#)):

And she discovered that up to 30 years, her small town had been poisoned seriously affecting the health of so many residents. Now, the sad case of course, is that Erin and the case of Hinckley is not isolated as news of different kinds of contaminants emerge. One of the latest in our own backyard and Oakey Queensland and in Williamtown north of Newcastle. But before we can get stuck into environmental matters, I want to briefly discuss with, with you Aaron, the the political environment in your country, all, all of us here. Oh, watching it with fascinated horror. Now, when you and I first met about 10 years ago, I asked you then whether you were considering a political career and you were, you weren't sure isn't a time if you did get stuck. Yeah.

Erin Brockovich ([00:04:55](#)):

[Inaudible] First of all, it was a pleasure to be here. Hello everybody. I'm Erin Brockovich, not Julia Roberts, just in case there's any connection. This is my first trip to Adelaide. I've been to Australia a lot and I have to tell you what it's, it's just lovely and it's a pleasure to be here, so good afternoon. And thank you for coming. Which do you want me to answer first? The state of affairs in America with Trump and Clinton, let's

Greg Mackie ([00:05:23](#)):

Accept that as a given, I'm wanting to see whether you're going to change it by becoming a politician.

Erin Brockovich ([00:05:30](#)):

Yeah. You know, I still do think about it. I'm up in DC a lot. I honestly don't know how they get anything done. When I am up there. It's hair-pulling experience. I thought I would run for Senator boxer's seat. She is finished and I changed my mind. I don't know that I was ready. I do believe that I can get more done on the outside. Sometimes when you get on the inside and you get all kinds of shackles on you and you can't get anything done most importantly, you have to behave. I don't always behave. Well. I try. And Senator Feinstein is retiring in two years and I've had a lot of people come and ask if I would really tear it, consider seriously running for her seat. So I'm thinking about it again, you

Greg Mackie ([00:06:26](#)):

Were a supporter of Bernie Sanders, aren't you?

Erin Brockovich ([00:06:29](#)):

I liked Bernie Sanders. I worked with Bernie before. He's just, he's genuine. He cares about the environment. He has a really good movement going. I will continue to work with him. He's back on the hill, but yeah, I know. Yeah. What I'm finding fascinating that's happening in America. And I think it happens in a lot of places. More recently is something that I've always wanted. I am an advocate for awareness and people. I think people have stopped believing in themselves and being active and being actively involved in who they're going to put into office. And whether it's Trump, Hillary, or Bernie, my fascination has been with the people and there is a movement going, people are frustrated, they're waking up. You know, I always tell people Superman's not coming. And we often think that agencies are there to protect us. And when we find out that they're not it wakes you up.

Erin Brockovich ([00:07:30](#)):

And I think America is waking up to a lot of things with the establishment problems and fighting against them. And so the people are really out there using their voice and it will be interesting to see how it, it, it plays itself out. I'm, I'm frustrated though, with how the campaign's going. I feel like I'm watching high school children and you said this, and you said that I'd really like us to look at some of the issues. So all of us are, are not pleased with how this campaign cycle has been running at all. So I know I'm talking about several things here at once, and I will still consider maybe, maybe running for Senator. You

Greg Mackie ([00:08:12](#)):

Reminding me backstage, that you were brought up in Republican household.

Erin Brockovich ([00:08:16](#)):

I was.

Greg Mackie ([00:08:18](#)):

And you also reminded me that there was a time when there was the Republicans who were pushing for environmental rules.

Erin Brockovich ([00:08:27](#)):

Yeah. Born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas university of Kansas. My mom was a journalist. My father was a mechanical engineer who worked for industry. I was raised by very staunch Republican man. Yet. He is the very one that taught me the values of water land, our environment, good health, and the most important gifts that we have, our family and our Republicans historically have implemented some of our best laws, the safe drinking act and saving our national forest. And they've kind of moved away from that platform. And for me, it should not be about politics. It does not matter what your party is. It does not matter how much money you have with the bank does not matter the color of your skin. We have a common denominator and we are all entitled to have clean water, good land and good health. And so I don't like politics coming into the environmental arena yet. It does.

Greg Mackie ([00:09:30](#)):

It is odd. In fact, it's more than a lot of it is appalling that climate change has hardly got a mention in the presidential debates.

Erin Brockovich ([00:09:40](#)):

No climate change has gotten very little and it concerns me that the environment and the state of our water crisis in the United States has not been mentioned at all. And again, none of us, if we, if we continue to do what we're doing, none of us are going to live without water come over. And yet we don't have a conversation and we need to, there are solutions and there are ways. And that's the key word solutions. You know, we've not been solution-driven on these issues for a very long time, the elephants in the room, and we all walk around and fight about it, but nobody comes in and does anything about it. And that's what we have to get busy doing. Not only in America, but here and throughout the planet, we definitely have issues and his campaign. No, we've not talked about that at all. That's, what's been so sad about the campaign, certainly from my perspective is the immature tit for tat issues on who's said what, who slept with who and whatever else they want to talk about, but let's not talk about the water of the economy, the state of the health and the welfare of people in the country. So I'm, they're just not speaking about it.

Greg Mackie ([00:10:59](#)):

You don't think that Trump will call you to the white house,

Erin Brockovich ([00:11:02](#)):

Trump?

Greg Mackie ([00:11:04](#)):

Yeah. Get you as his advisor

Erin Brockovich ([00:11:06](#)):

Doubtful.

Greg Mackie ([00:11:09](#)):

I just wanted to clarify that.

Greg Mackie ([00:11:13](#)):

Let's go back. Let's go back to Hinckley. I understand that these days it's almost a ghost town.

Erin Brockovich ([00:11:18](#)):

Hinkley is a ghost town Hinckley's gone. It's done. After the film came out PGNE had to go back into Hinckley and buy up rest of the houses because the plume continued to March on the town is gone. The post office has gone. The schools are closed and PGE is looking down the barrel of a 250 year cleanup, 250 years. Many of these chemicals are very persistent in the environment and, you know, we do as backwards. You know, we we just throw chemicals out there and wait and see for us as Guinea pigs, what the result is. And I think that we need to study and understand these chemicals before we ever put them on the market. But Hinckley is virtually, it goes 10. It's gone. Sort

Greg Mackie ([00:12:10](#)):

Of, it was fascinating that the LA times reported in 2015 that the final cleanup plan was moving towards approval. But of course, by the time it gets underway, the community has vanished.

Erin Brockovich ([00:12:26](#)):

Well again, you know bring up, you know, politicizing water or the environment in these chemicals is very frustrating because it takes agencies anywhere from 10 to 15 to 20 to 25 years to study just one chemical. And we've got 88,000 of them out on the market. And so there's a huge delay and a huge lag time. And we've got to find ways to, to speed that up, but we'll still be fighting about chemicals.

Greg Mackie ([00:12:57](#)):

Many of the people that you've helped over the years. Many of the people that you've fought for will be voting for Trump. And that comes as no surprise to you who doesn't because of the alienation, then their anger, their disappointments.

Erin Brockovich ([00:13:12](#)):

Right. Well, I mean, people are frustrated. They're tired of the status quo. They're tired of the establishment and they want something to shake it up. Anybody to shake it up, even if it's Trump, they just are tired of it. And then I, I understand that. I mean, I bang my head against the wall. I'm like, here we go again. I just, I can't believe it. And it's, it's very frustrating.

Greg Mackie ([00:13:37](#)):

Do you have much confidence that Hillary Clinton will address these issues?

Erin Brockovich ([00:13:43](#)):

I don't know. I don't know. You know, I'm disappointed. President Obama certainly ran a platform of environmental issues and he did good. I think he could have done some more. And I don't, I don't know that Hillary will. I, I'm just not certain. I w I wished I could say with certainty, I'm uncertain about everything. Hell I think I'm just going to ride in a boat. I mean, we are all starting to feel that way.

Greg Mackie ([00:14:15](#)):

Aaron, the state of California set a safe drinking water standard of 10 parts, chromium six, 10 pads, chromium six per billion. But to many in the community, your level of 3.1 makes people anxious. Is there any such thing as a safe level of chromium six?

Erin Brockovich ([00:14:37](#)):

There's see, that's the thing. There's no safe level of any chemical it's like, are you kidding me? A poison as a poison, as a poison all day long, right? I don't stop to ask if it's two parts per billion or 10 parts per billion. I just drank a poison. I don't want to drink a poison at any level. And, and we fought for 20 years to get a state maximum contaminant limit for hexavalent chromium, six set, 20 years, we had the state brought in the top experts on hexavalent chromium and they set a public health goal of 0.02 parts per billion. That's very low. And that is what's protective of the public health and welfare. Yeah. When they set the M C L because they knew most municipalities were going to exceed that limit. So for the sake of budgetary reasons and costs, they set the MCL at 10 parts per billion. That's still above what you just decided the public health goal was, is it's crazy.

Erin Brockovich ([00:15:47](#)):

And sure enough when that goal got set, I can't tell you how many municipalities up and down the state of California clearly exceed the public health goal clearly exceed the 10 PPA B. And we have issues throughout the entire state of people who have been ingesting hexavalent chromium. Now, just recently, and I work a lot with the environmental working group out of Washington, DC. They took EPA data and the EPA has been sitting on it for a long time and put that information on a map 218 million Americans are drinking varying levels of hexavalent chromium 218 million. And we don't talk about it.

Greg Mackie ([00:16:43](#)):

We often discuss the phenomenon of what's called regulatory capture on the program. That's when an industry in fact takes over the regulator effectively, and it was seen vividly during the global financial crisis. Is there any degree of regulatory capture with the environmental protection agency? Hasn't been white anted?

Erin Brockovich ([00:17:08](#)):

No, I could S I could probably pick on the EPA all day long. I don't know that I really like to, they have very well-meaning to people within that agency. They're overburdened, they're understaffed. They have no funding. They have 33,000 Superfund sites right now. They can't get to, it is a failed agency. We all know it. And I don't know that we need more regulations. What we need is enforcement. Nobody is out there and forcing these regulations that we've put into place. If we just did that, we might see some change

Greg Mackie ([00:17:47](#)):

Through virtually no, no people to rest at noon. People charged with malfeasance after the, the GFC. Have there been significant charges in your country against people who are major polluters?

Erin Brockovich ([00:18:05](#)):

No, we, we have seen a little movement, you know, lawsuits. Aren't always the answer. I've said many times that I think if criminal charges are filed, companies might start behaving a little better. If that CEO

had to go to jail he might really consider what's going on in his company. And if there's a pollution issue, dealing with it very quickly, we did see some convictions on the river spill up in West Virginia minor, but they were still filed. Flint. Michigan has been heavily in the news. That was a situation that we called out a year before it happened. My water quality expert went to the city and wrote them a report on exactly how to deal with this. And they'd basically told us to go to hell and they did what they wanted to do anyway, that has resulted in a terrible disaster. And there have been some criminal charges filed, but not at the level it should have been. And that would be with the governor who knew what was going on, but other people have gone under the bus and there will be criminal charges. And we were in, in this instance, you're going to see some people go to jail.

Greg Mackie ([00:19:22](#)):

I want to talk briefly about another chemical PCBs ban by Congress. I think 40 years ago, as a cancer threat, a new logical problem. It still poses a serious threat, particularly to American school children,

Erin Brockovich ([00:19:41](#)):

Pcbs. Yes, PCBs are in everything. And, you know, in Malibu high school, people don't realize that PCVs are in cocking that go around windows. So all these schools, when they're it's winter and rain and the schools are closed up and the kids are in there, this, these PCVs actually off gas. And yet we have, we're not coming in to look at a nationwide issue and removal of all caulking from schools. So PCBs are still in our environment in many of our products as is PF oh way. And that's another chemical per fluoro, Kaka tonic acid. It took me a while to learn how to say that one

Greg Mackie ([00:20:29](#)):

High levels of the firefighting foam chemicals have been found in OGI in Queensland and north Newcastle, and also a military bases around the country. I understand that while the foam is no longer used by Australian defense forces, but there are similar cases in the us.

Erin Brockovich ([00:20:51](#)):

Oh my gosh, PFO is a problem worldwide. It's been banned in the EU has been banned in the United States. I think you guys are now going to get rid of it. I think unfortunately, Australia has learned a very difficult lesson about this chemical that's in new south Wales. And, you know, there's advisories not to eat the oysters. It's very persistent in the environment. It will damage the food chain and it's not good to drink. And it is very toxic compound and an oaky. There's some of the highest levels we've ever seen of P F O A and here's what has to stop. And it was my recommendation. Get ahead of this right now, get to every military base, find out what your P F O A levels are. Get the communities advised immediately. That's the thing that was the problem. And oaky was the delay. And these people continued to drink this contaminant and consumers and communities can handle the truth, but you got to tell them the truth and you have to be transparent with them or otherwise they aren't able to protect and defend themselves. So the PFO is a problem in this country. You're going to probably find it at every military site. You're probably going to find it at a lot of airports, but you now know it's here got two aquifers right here in Adelaide. They're going to be closed down because of PFO contamination. You're not going to be able to use your bore. And there is a solution to this. It can be clean, even though it's very persistent in the environment, you can run filters, run those aquifers through them. It's going to be expensive. The Jimmy to get ahead of the problem

Greg Mackie ([00:22:50](#)):

In the interest of disclosure, I think I should point out the Juul rum, the firm with which you were associated, shine lawyers are working on the proposition. The 200 oak residents consider a class action lawsuit against the federal government. Given your experience, do you think class actions can be effective?

Erin Brockovich ([00:23:12](#)):

They can, you know, the arm of the law is and can be an effective tool for the people, listen, an Oakey, you know, they've lost their land. They've lost their water. They could be losing their cattle. They've lost their health. They are clearly entitled and deserve legal protection. And so, yes, if they're handled appropriately they are there to help the people. So we we don't often do class actions in the United States when involved in environmental cases, we do direct action. So each person is heard as an individual. Each person has different varying levels of exposure and different amounts of time that they were exposed. And so we do direct actions. And in any settlement, based on your illness, how long, where you lived in a contaminated zone, if you're there 25 years and have cancer, you will get a higher dollar figure than somebody that moved there and lived there for six months and has no disease. So we don't do a lot of class actions in the us.

Greg Mackie ([00:24:27](#)):

You campaigned energetically against the worst excesses of fracking in the us.

Erin Brockovich ([00:24:34](#)):

Fracking?

Greg Mackie ([00:24:34](#)):

Yeah.

Erin Brockovich ([00:24:36](#)):

Well we have a, you know what, sometimes I have these conversations. I think this is very depressing. But having said that you, the people are the hope. And I mean that every time I get into a community and I see somebody speaking up and speaking out and taking charge it's always hopeful. I can share a lot of good stories with you that way. If fracking being one of them at fracking, we certainly are having problems in the United States with the water being contaminated people's Wells going dry. It takes millions of gallons of water to frack one. Well, and one, well can be fracked numerous times. So it's untold the billions of gallons of water that have been used for fracking with up to 40,000 chemicals involved that gets re-injected into the aquifer and it's going to pop up somewhere. And it always does.

Erin Brockovich ([00:25:45](#)):

We're now dealing with, because of the actual fracking specifically in Oklahoma earthquakes. So people's homes are being damaged, their water's being polluted, but we have many states that have now banned fracking. We have many counties that have now banned fracking, and we have many communities really standing up and getting involved at a very, very local level, your own city council or those permits first get had, and they're pushing back and they're actually winning. So the hope always comes from the people. And I know that people are concerned about fracking in Australia. I know that no gate and I certainly support you, but it will be up to you to push back in your own community, to keep fracking at bay. And everybody's concerned about it. There's a right way to frack. There's a wrong

way to frack. They always choose the wrong way to frack because it's the cheap way to frack. And I understand that we need energy, but we can't keep doing that and destroying our water and our people. So fracking comes with a lot of issues and people don't want it, but I will tell you, in the United States, they are very successful in communities and in states and they are banning it. Can I

Greg Mackie ([00:27:18](#)):

Ask you a very personal question? What do you do with your nuclear waste?

Erin Brockovich ([00:27:26](#)):

Well, apparently you bring it to Adelaide. Do y'all want that in your backyard? You know, I've, I've met with some of your environmental ministers and I'm like, you need to listen to the people. That's a no brainer. That's just a no brainer. It's not even your nuclear waste and you're going to bring it here to Australia. It's nuclear is dangerous, especially when there is an accident and there's no taking it back. We're dealing with a situation in Florida right now with mosaic. It's a big phosphorus mining company. They bring up the uranium and the radioactive waste and they store in ponds. They had a little problem, a huge sinkhole opened up underneath those ponds and all of that radio active waste went into the second, most prolific aquifer in the world. Can't take that back.

Erin Brockovich ([00:28:41](#)):

We have to figure out as a world, how we are going to dispose of our hazardous waste and having a nuclear waste facility that isn't even yours in your backyard for me is a, no-brainer no way, no, how fight like, hell, don't let it happen.

Greg Mackie ([00:29:14](#)):

Erin, don't hold back. So what you really think this is the festival of ideas and Adelaide, I guess, is here in Brooklyn bridge. And this is also a late night live. And that means it's time to hand over to the audience for questions. I understand that there are a number of microphones as one in the gods in the house and the, in the upper house is one in the Senate. And there's one on the rips. Can I see where the microphones are? Please? I cut this one there, ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to interrogate Erin now is your opportunity. If you could, if you put your hands up, the microphone will be brought to you. Here we go is one brave hand on the left side of the auditorium, which speaks for itself.

Erin Brockovich ([00:30:09](#)):

I will let you all know that I'm now a grandmother times three. That's fun fact.

Audience member ([00:30:22](#)):

I was wondering when you were talking about enforcement, what you think about the situation in Brazil and the Brazilian government bringing some of the people in putting charges and some of the people responsible for that massive disaster in Brazil some of the people from BHP,

Erin Brockovich ([00:30:44](#)):

Like I said earlier, we are seeing more of that. And I think it's something that needs to happen. I mean, sometimes I feel like I'm talking to a five-year-old could get all of us, told our kids pick up your mess. And I mean, these companies need to come in and pick up your mess. And if they don't and they knowingly have done this and harmed people, I think you're going to see more bringing them back in and holding

them accountable in a criminal manner. So what do I think of it? Maybe it's high time. I think that it's, it's necessary to hold people accountable, especially when you knowingly because of a pollution issue and disaster harm people and take their life. I just think that you need to come clean up your mess and you need to be held accountable. Did that answer your question by the way? Hello? Did you, you went and sat down. Yes. Okay. Hi. hi

Audience member ([00:31:46](#)):

Erin, I'm a documentary filmmaker based here in Adelaide. And I've come to understand that the scientific community is often in quite a vulnerable position when it comes to the production of work that is of public good. Ultimately they're under economic pressure that comes from obviously within governance structures that they're answerable to. Do you have any stories you can relate where you've experienced scientists who've been under pressure and their work has either been compromised by being taken out of their hands or otherwise been interfered with,

Erin Brockovich ([00:32:20](#)):

Well, I've always, yes. You know, we, we see some of that in the United States and sometimes scientists do get paid and can do papers for the wrong reason, but there's really good scientists out there. I think oftentimes they don't have the data that they need for their, because, and I'm working on a map right now in the United States, we're going to build out a national registry base. Can you believe in the United States of America, we don't have a national cancer reporting registry database. And what we're learning through the map is people are migratory and they move away from a place and oftentimes long latency periods with chemicals. So we get a disease 20, 25 years down the road, and people move away to, let's say Florida, but we're exposed in Hinkley, California. We'll never, we don't know those numbers. We need them to have a place to report what's going on, where they live and where they're from.

Erin Brockovich ([00:33:19](#)):

So I think that there's a lot of missing data points available for science. We need to let science do its job. And in no way, do I think politics should come in and alter that information in any way, shape or form the scientists need to come out and get the information that they can. And nobody should be tainting with those, those reports. And I don't, I don't think agencies, no, no, no, no, no. That's not fair. No bad answers. No, no. See, now I'm going to get off. So we don't want to find that out that that's happening. But listen, science is here for us. There are really great people in science. I love the science. We want to work with the science, but they need the data and they don't need to be altered. Falsification. Falsification of reports is very bad. We're seeing that in the United States. And honestly, you're going to start doing stuff like that. You're another category you should go to jail too.

Erin Brockovich ([00:34:26](#)):

[Inaudible]

Greg Mackie ([00:34:26](#)):

The microphone in the house of reps is vacant, but I see a Senator wishes to raise a question, sir,

Audience member ([00:34:35](#)):

Senator how kind. Erin, the issue of nuclear waste is is of course, sorry, up the top right up here.

Erin Brockovich ([00:34:48](#)):

Yes. I was like, whoa. Hi.

Audience member ([00:34:57](#)):

The nuclear waste issue is, is a problem for us all globally. We in this country have got a stable geological environment, particularly here in south Australia. We produce uranium and other radioactive products from medical waste and so on and so forth. Where, where would you, I mean, the tool, we get some other technology to solve the problem other than putting it in the ground. What else would you like to be done with it? And where do you think is, is it reasonable to, to say, well, the Japanese used the Dinair nuclear reactors. They can look after their waste. The country is too unstable for this. And that runs the risk of if there's another accent there or in other parts of California,

Greg Mackie ([00:36:01](#)):

We get the gist of the question, Erin,

Audience member ([00:36:04](#)):

We will, you've got the gist of the question. Okay. Where else would you like it to be put?

Erin Brockovich ([00:36:11](#)):

Well that's an excellent question, but not in my backyard, honestly. And, and I, I said earlier, the whole world has to deal with this issue of how we dispose of our hazardous waste. And it's concerning because we're having issues with that waste. Getting into the groundwater, we've all saw what happened in Fukushima and we're dealing with fallouts of that all the way in California. So it's a very serious, legitimate concern for all of us. Where are we dispose of it? I'm not really sure. I was short of shooting into outer space and that might not be about idea. It might not be a good idea. We don't want it raining nuclear on us. So the universe is

Greg Mackie ([00:37:05](#)):

We don't want it in our black hole. No. Yeah.

Erin Brockovich ([00:37:10](#)):

But you ask an excellent question. I wished I had a really good answer for you and I don't, but the conversation we have really seriously got to look at how and where we're going to dispose of all this hazardous waste that we have created and we cannot continue to use, or water supply is some massive filtration system to get rid of all of these chemicals. And it's, you know, there's other places, if we're going to have to store nuclear waste, it shouldn't be in communities that are full of people in their backyard. Maybe move it out to some serious, far away, Sahara deserts in a big, huge vault that can't be breached under any circumstances. This is questioning the question time in the reps. If someone

Greg Mackie ([00:38:15](#)):

Would like to go to the microphone, I'm going to settle this matter once. And for all with a good, simple democratic vote, those in favor of a nuclear waste dump in south Australia, please put up your hands. No, it's just interesting. This, I think two and a half those opposed. Oh, DeRay, dear Eric, look at that matter. Mature 10, just for the radio listeners. I think you'd have to say it was overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly against, but perhaps this is that sort of audience, Madam

Audience member ([00:38:52](#)):

Given the URI successful environmental campaigner, and we are currently faced with the possibility of a high level radioactive dumped in south Australia and a media blackout that won't report anything except something on page nine at the bottom left-hand side. Can you give us some strategies as to how we can get our message out there about how dangerous this is? Because there's way too much pro stuff going out there. That's persuading people that this might be okay.

Erin Brockovich ([00:39:22](#)):

Well that's an excellent question again in your communities, you know, we have found something that's very effective and that's getting communities to do a Facebook page where anybody who has concerns can go and know where other community members are, where they stand. You could provide information out there and awareness for them as to what's going on the pros and the cons. And you know, by way of example, in Fridley, Minnesota we have a huge TCE contamination. There's about six defendants. There's not going to be any lawsuit. The state and the agencies have failed them. And they created a Facebook and boy, how did they get strong? And now people are more informed. I've seen the women in the United States of America who had the east shirt procedure, which is a medical device gone very bad. And as a form of birth control, they are 50,000 strong.

Erin Brockovich ([00:40:28](#)):

When you guys get in numbers, you will be heard 50,000 women strong and growing the information and the facts that they haven't gotten out there on their Facebook page has now gotten them at a congressional level. They are being heard by the FDA, by senators, they're introducing legislation and bills. So in your community to get the word out, do a Facebook page, do posters go down to your local council. And again, we've had moments that are amazing shell and Carson, California. They weren't doing their job, the city council level. Have you ever been used city council meeting? No. Most of you now let me do, let me tell you what all they do is hear themselves talk in there because if you don't show up, they don't know what's going on. So in the situation in Carson, California, 4,000 residents showed up by God.

Erin Brockovich ([00:41:38](#)):

They were heard, then next day it changed. And that's what you need to do. Think of all of you in this room and getting out and campaigning or going to a Facebook page or letting your neighbor know in numbers, get a petition and start circulating it, go door to door. That's what I did. And you'll be heard it, the masses get heard, but right now, if it's fragmented and there's just a few, it doesn't get heard. So those are a few of the things that communities we've worked with have done, and they have been successful in getting the word out, start a petition, start a Facebook, get together as Adelaide, go door to door. If you have to get your facts information, be armed and go do it. And you'll be really surprised in the masses. I would think that you're going to be effective, get it to go to a boat. Push really hard.

Audience member ([00:42:41](#)):

Yes. In the Southeast, there has been shell gas exploration. This is part of south Australia's 4.6% prime agricultural land. Normally we're recognized as the dry state and the driest inhabited continent in the world. We've had flooding down there, which has been quite unusual. It's an area of limestone and Western coals are occurring right now. And we've had two Wells drilled down there to four kilometers below the surface. The wastewater was removed from the pond. They nearly had overflowing. And I, I spoke to the government and the EPA on this and, and the company involved that was moved under an

EPA emergency license to another pond for fear of overflowing. And this is a couple of years ago that wastewater has now been spread on agricultural land down there untreated. And there are a number of chemicals and contaminants that have not been tested for how many cases or what cases you're aware of, where chemicals and contaminants turn up in water or soil. Some years later when the companies may not exist anymore, or whether the petroleum or mining companies have left long ago, and who takes care of that?

Erin Brockovich ([00:44:12](#)):

I could tell you that scenario is probably most of the United States of America and these chemicals. It is really it's common sense. And I get this all the time and I do want to share this with the community here tonight. I can't tell you how many times has said to me, or hasn't heard me or a community because we're not scientists and we're not doctors and we're not lawyers and we're not politicians. Therefore, what do we know? I don't have to be nor do any of you, any of that to be a human being. And to know that when you inject chemicals deep down into a groundwater aquifer, that they're going to pop up somewhere else and be a problem. And this is what I want all of you to go away today, knowing you can change things. It may not happen as fast as you want.

Erin Brockovich ([00:45:19](#)):

You may want to give up, but if you stick together for the long haul, something will give and something will change. And in the United States of America, we see scenarios playing themselves out like that everywhere. This is why the EPA is in the position they're in with 33,000 Superfund sites. There's no funding for them. There's no support for them. We're waiting for all this magic to happen from the top and trickle down. It's not working out, is it? I'll tell you what will work out. It starts in your backyard and at a very local level there's things that you can do in your city council there's cleanup programs that you can initiate. There's laws that can be passed. Imagine if every one of us did that, we would light up and we would be able to begin to tackle some of these issues. And so when the EPA is absent for us, you know, we'll have communities say, Ooh, the EPA is here.

Erin Brockovich ([00:46:21](#)):

Well, that's the kiss of death because nothing's going to get done. Now, we're going to have to start doing it ourselves when I'm I'm serious. When I tell you Superman's not coming and I'm serious when I tell you tag, you are it. And so there will be frustration, but you can get the information. You can get a community together. You can get to city council and there's things that you can do. You know what everyone thinks it's so overwhelming. Cause we have to save the world. We're going to begin to do that by saving yourself first and what's happening in your backyard. And so yes, when you re-inject chemicals deep into an aquifer, I guarantee you we're going to be watching it happen right now. They are going to pop up and they're going to pop their ugly head up somewhere. And they've probably already passed through people's bores and people unknowingly have already been exposed. So I am really, really, really, really learning that these permits are happening at a very local level. And that's where you have to get in and do the work. I'll share something very with you. And I will tell you that almost 10 times out of 10, it's a woman that gets in there. It's true. Every single time off a mama, get out of their way. I'm not kidding. We know it. And Hannibal, Missouri chloramines are a big issue. You're starting to use chloramines here. They're a very big problem in the United States and in Hannibal, Missouri, these communities. And first of all, we have a lead and copper rule in the United States. And most people don't realize that you only have to test for lead once every four years, that's it. And then when you do test for it, you can take an average. So somebody that really has heightened lead levels in their water, you won't ever know

because they just average the numbers. So in Hannibal, Missouri, a group of about five moms that I don't want this in my water. So they raised a little bit of money. They went around town, they got a petition going, they went to city council and they weren't going to go away.

Erin Brockovich ([00:48:40](#)):

And it went to a vote. They no longer have chloramines in their water. And two of those women now sit on city council and they made a change and you can do that. This is the hope, and there are steps that you can take. So I, I hope that helps all of you. And I wish that I, and I won't always have an answer. None of us will, but I do know this. If we, we just get complacent and we think someone's going to fix it for us and we give up and go away, we lose hope. Then we're done and we can never do that. And I am every single time I go out to a community, I am inspired by what these people do and what they will fight for. And they stay with it for the long haul. They don't back down and in the end they get a change and they have been effective. And so really it does start with just one person and that one person could be you or every one of you in this room.

Greg Mackie ([00:49:49](#)):

It's quite clear that Julia Roberts wasn't up to the task. Only Erin can play Erin. This is a Adelaide festival of ideas. The theme is make or break it's question time, Madam. Hi there.

Audience member ([00:50:04](#)):

My name is Lisa. I live in port Augusta, a small town north of Adelaide. And we've had I've been involved in a campaign there for the last five years to transition from a coal fired power station to a clean, renewable solar, thermal power station. And it's been a long road and I know that there's lots of campaigners and environmentalist in this room today. So I just thought, I'd just, what is it that sustains you on the long, long road

Erin Brockovich ([00:50:32](#)):

That keeps me on the inspiration that keeps me going, oh, I can think of a whole lot, you know, it was just recently it wasn't that recently go there. A documentary came out called baby boomers and I got a phone call and they're like, you know, we've picked you to be one of the baby boomers that, you know, made a difference and I'm like, you've called the wrong number. I'm not a baby boomer. They're like, yeah, Erin, you are... Wow, that caught up with me. But they asked me a question very similar to that. And, but here's what they says asked. And here's what I'll ask all of you, what will be your legacy? And I get, I do, I get very emotional what keeps me going, what will be my legacy? I have the cutest little grandchildren, grace and Molly and Charlie, if we don't continue to find our inspiration and our hope for them and change, we leave a bad legacy and I don't want to be a part of that. And I look at all of us and that is my hope. That was my inspiration. And I look into those grandchildren's eyes and I will go down fighting. And I mean that to make sure that they have a decent enough planet and a safe environment to live in long after I am gone. So that's what keep me going.

Audience member ([00:52:19](#)):

Hi, I'm really nervous right now. You're like my idol.

Erin Brockovich ([00:52:23](#)):

That's okay. I'm crying now. So it's no problem.

Audience member ([00:52:26](#)):

My question for you is what would you personally do to help save our great barrier reef? Oh,

Erin Brockovich ([00:52:32](#)):

I love your great barrier reef, everything, everything that you can possibly do, everything I know climate change is a huge problem. Anything that you can remove that eases the stress on your great barrier reef? It's, it's a huge task. I know that there's a portion of it that is already dead. There's a lot of bleaching that's going on, but anything that eases that burden, I would hope that you would all come to do and to aide that incredible, incredible, incredible gift from God that most gorgeous resource that you have right here off of your coast. Anything that you can do to be involved, whether you go out there or signing petitions or educating yourself, making certain that your government in fact is God, it's arms wrapped around that and everything you can do to protect and preserve it and prevent further damage from happening. It's a glorious, glorious, yeah. Left

Greg Mackie ([00:53:34](#)):

Listening to that. I've decided to change my name by deed poll to Paula Adams. Madam last chances to ask questions. Yes, please.

Audience member ([00:53:50](#)):

Going back to the nuclear dump proposed for south Australia again. This is a question on manufacturing consent today. An Aboriginal person raised a concern with me that a delegation came to their community, talking about the proposed nuclear dump. They were left feeling that the visit was a tick, the box exercise. So for this visit, they got themselves two ticks, one for community consultation and one for consulting in Aboriginal community. Although the Aboriginal community didn't feel that they had been consulted. What advice or comment can you make for these communities?

Erin Brockovich ([00:54:33](#)):

I'm not sure how to answer that. They're not getting information.

Audience member ([00:54:37](#)):

It's called manufacturing consent where there's a token process of going out and consulting with the community, but it's not really consulting with the community. So it's to be able to say that they have done this and the community said, yeah, it's okay, go ahead. Do it. When they really didn't.

Erin Brockovich ([00:54:59](#)):

Are, is this an agency that's doing this?

Audience member ([00:55:01](#)):

It's a government government department

Greg Mackie ([00:55:03](#)):

It's a fake process of consultation, a fake process, a pseudo process of consultation and government agencies around the country do it. And they come along to an individual to immunity, to a group and

they have a bit of a chat and they say, see you later, nothing changes, but they can tick their apparatchik box. The due process has been observed. It must be a common phenomenon in the us.

Erin Brockovich ([00:55:36](#)):

You know, one thing that comes to my mind that that is helpful to spread a word like that is media. And they can, because sometimes you need a broader awareness. So have there been local reporters in and around these communities that you can reach out to that could cover this story to help get a larger,

Greg Mackie ([00:56:02](#)):

I think the answer to that is pretty much, no.

Audience member ([00:56:05](#)):

Yeah, that's right.

Erin Brockovich ([00:56:06](#)):

No?

Greg Mackie ([00:56:11](#)):

Sorry. You can't be heard...

Erin Brockovich ([00:56:13](#)):

Yeah, she's saying, I can hear, they won't print the stories. They won't print the stories. It may be is it may, could still be some of the process again, you know, when I did my work in Hinkley, isn't it amazing. We have this incredible technology right at our hands, whether you get a Facebook going or tweet some information out, a lot of people aren't using that. It's amazing to me today, sometimes still the good old fashioned way to do it is hands on and door to door and you yourself or your neighbors going out to let people be advised of a situation like this and that it's happening. And isn't it really though the truth. We have all this great technology and yet we're still not really talking to each other. And we still really don't know a lot of information. So door to door, hands-on person to person, the old fashioned way, doesn't history repeat itself, and things come back in a cycle. I'm hoping that some of this, you know, common sense stuff door to door grassroots and pull your boots up and get marching comes back because even in all this technology, we still aren't communicating that well.

Greg Mackie ([00:57:38](#)):

I think this will be the final question.

Audience member ([00:57:42](#)):

Hi Erin. I've been interested hearing about your concerns in regards to certain forms of nonrenewable and clean energy sources. So I'm wondering what types of renewable and clean energy sources you promote or are you excited about?

Erin Brockovich ([00:58:01](#)):

Well, you know, I think solar's kind of interesting, you know in the U S solar panels and that's a good form of renewable energy. That's an excellent question. I'll have to think about that. Solar comes to

mind right away for new, renewable energy. You know, we, we have energy sources that, that are fine. We've come a really long way, but we're going to have to make some amendments and changes in some of these energy sources and how we get them. And as we extract them to strike a balance of the, how we protect the environment and our water supply and our health and our welfare, and that's really, what's been missing a lot of, some of the energy out there is perfectly fine and acceptable, and we all know that, but we're going to have to find a better balance.

Erin Brockovich ([00:59:03](#)):

We can't, it's, it's the system, the scales are tipped really unfairly. And again, we talk about fracking and these companies need to come in and we all understand that we need energy and we want energy that we're going to have to strike a balance of how we get that, where we dispose of it and make the priority of the environment in our health first and their profitability second. And so we need to work on how we're going to find that balance. And so there are some new energy sources out there. I am a fan of solar. And some of what we have is clearly obviously acceptable, but some of the things and how we're obtaining it or not. And we, we have to work on that and change our mindsets.

Greg Mackie ([00:59:53](#)):

We're at an event where the energy is generated by ideas. It's the Adelaide festival of ideas. I think the festival, I thank the audience and Erin, I thank you.

Erin Brockovich ([01:00:05](#)):

It was a pleasure to be here. [inaudible].