**Contraction & Convergence: a framework for negotiating international agreements consistent with planetary boundaries**

Prof Brendan Mackey, PhD

Director, Griffith University Climate Change Response Program

**Abstract**

We find ourselves in difficult times with many planetary boundaries either breached or at straining point – the climate change problem and the biodiversity extinction crisis being two prominent expressions of this malaise. Such global problems demand global solutions. The human species while rich in its diversity of cultural expressions and local contexts also has shared values, needs and aspirations. Irrespective of the source of our ethics (be it religion or humanism), at the most fundamental level we all believe that life is better than non-life, and accept the axiom that consequently we must be concerned for the quality of life lived. Giving effect to this belief in turn demands we treat life with respect and care. Furthermore, we now find universal acceptance that (at least) all human life is of equal intrinsic value and therefore that solutions to global problems must serve equally all people’s concerns and capacities. Taking the climate problem as our focus, how can it be solved in ways consistent with these ethical foundations? The solution lies is using ‘contraction and convergence’ (C&C) which was originally conceived and is still being promoted by Aubrey Meyer from the Global Commons Foundation as a framework for climate change treaty mitigation negotiations. However, C&C is equally applicable to all global environmental problems where the problem hinges on equitable distribution over time of a finite natural resource. Other issues to which it has been applied include global animal protein supply and rare earth metals. In this presentation I explain the principles of C&C, explore some related justice issues, and discuss how it can help the international community secure the “real deal” – one that results in legally binding mitigation commitments that will stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at a level within the planet’s safe operating space.

**Speaker biography**

Prof Brendan Mackey is director of Griffith University’s Climate Change Response Program. Brendan’s areas of research expertise include climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, environmental policy and sustainability ethics. He leads the Bioregional Futures Program with the NERP funded Landscape and Policy Hub and serves on the editorial board of Pacific Conservation. He is a member of the global governing council for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).