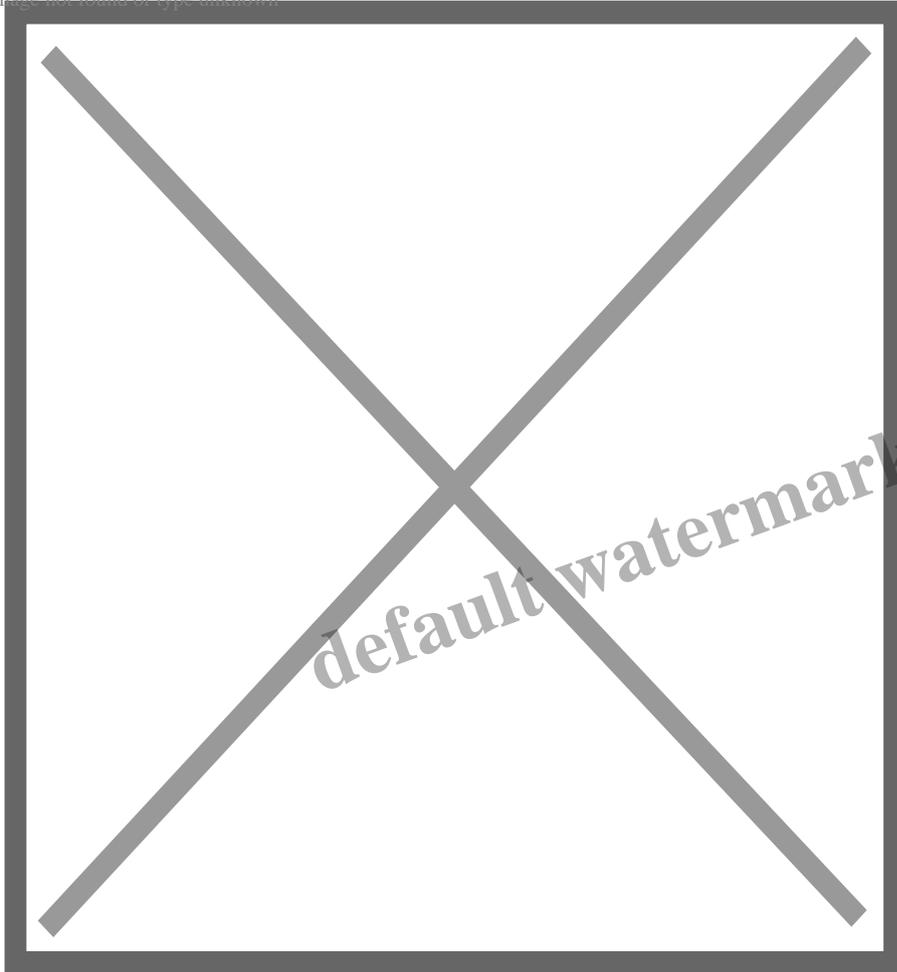


And . . . what are we going to do about it?

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It's easy to be overwhelmed by the issues facing humanity and the planet, but it's important to find positive things that can be done.

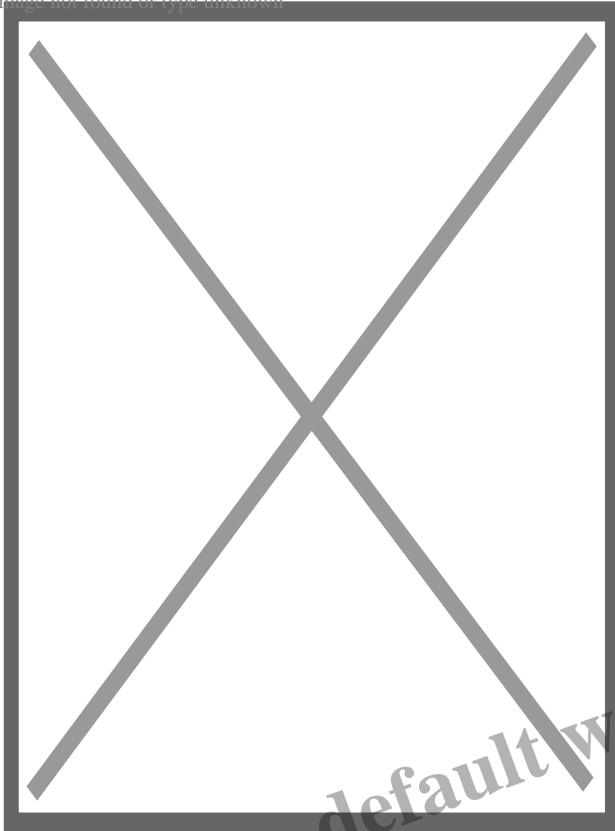
"Don't it always seem to go, you don't know what you've got till it's gone". Big Yellow Taxi, Joni Mitchell 1970

In an earlier [post](#), I discussed the multiple dimensions of our individual responses to ecological damage and change. I likened this to the grieving process – grief over what is being lost and destroyed and despair about our individual collective ability to do anything about it. Grief elicits a series of reactions including anger, denial and depression, but grieving can also eventually result in acceptance. And hope is an important background element.

I've just been reading Sarah Wilson's book [This One Wild and Precious Life: A Hopeful Path Forward in a Fractured World](#), published last year. In this book, Sarah explores these issues on a global scale – she was researching these in the context of climate change when the COVID-19 pandemic hit,

bringing everything into sharp focus.

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We live in truly overwhelming times. The climate crisis, political polarisation, racial injustice and coronavirus have left many of us in a state of spiritual PTSD. We have retreated, morally and psychologically; we are experiencing a crisis of disconnection – from one another, from our true values, from joy, and from life as we feel we are meant to be living it.

Sarah Wilson argues that this sense of despair and disconnection is ironically what unites us – that deep down, we are all feeling that same itch for a new way of living. this one wild and precious life opens our eyes to how we got here and offers a radically hopeful path forward.

[Goodreads](#)

Here are a couple of passages from the book:

In [Timothy Morton's](#) book (titled [Hyperobjects](#)) he explains that the climate crisis and other human-made clusterfucks of the Anthropocene are now fundamentally too big to wrap our heads around, control or fix. We are trapped in it, part of the unwieldy whole, so it is manifestly impossible. But precisely because we are trapped in such hyperobjects, we are condemned to live with the awareness of them (we are reminded of coral bleaching every time we turn on the ignition in our car, for example). All of which basically causes a messy implosion of our brains.

Me, I describe it as a fear-guilt-anger-despair-overwhelm cycle.

....

We can always add an 'and . . .?' to a shit sandwich. We can be in grief, we can itch, we can be overwhelmed, and we can choose to do something about it. We don't have to be rendered numb, asleep, despairing. I learned some time back that I could be fretting with anxiety and I could choose to live a great life. It was a revelation when I opened myself to this truth. I didn't have to wait for a 'fix' before I got on with living fully.

'And . . . what are we going to do about it?' It's the big, beautiful question for our times.

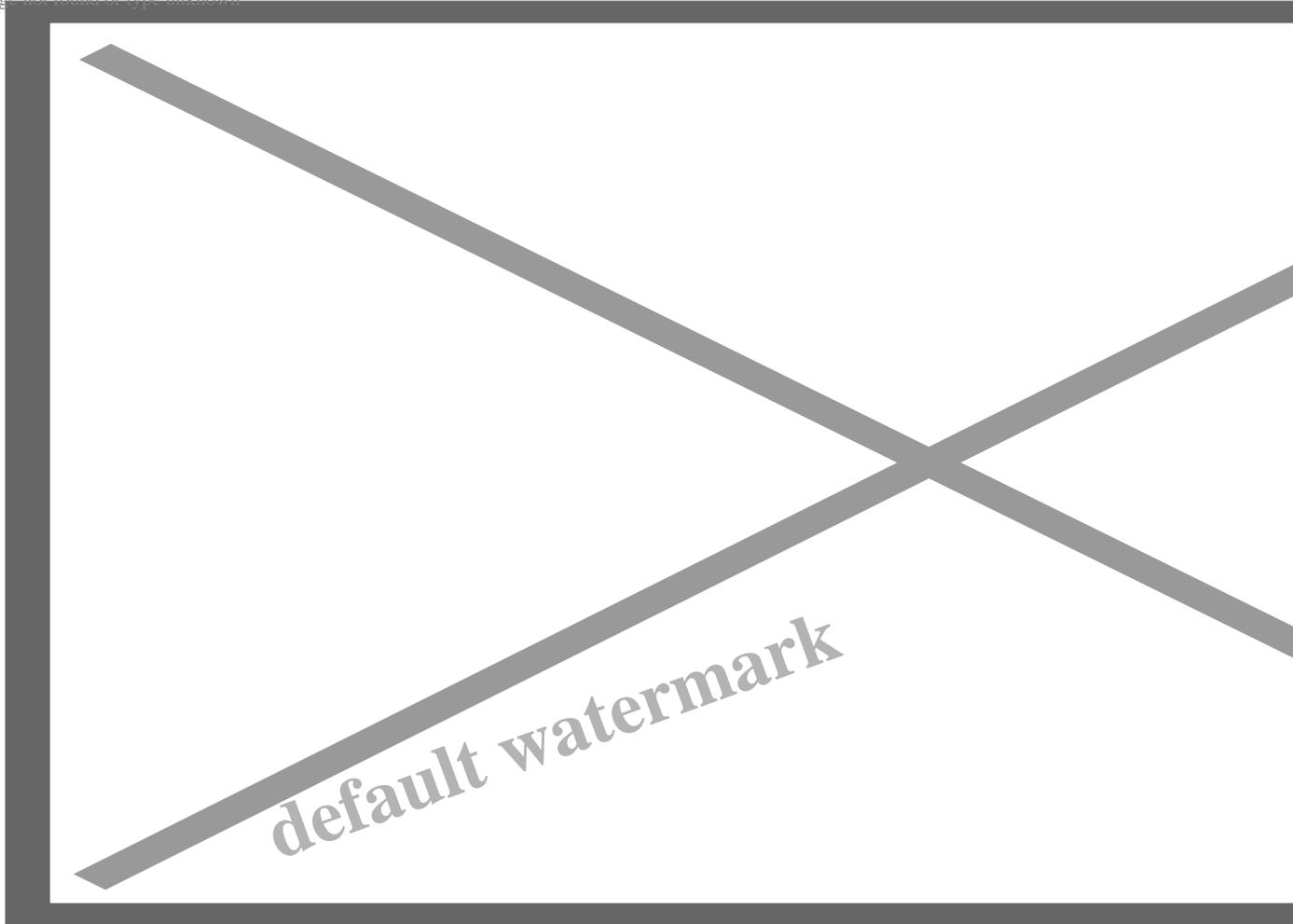
*Wilson, Sarah. This One Wild and Precious Life: A Hopeful Path Forward in a Fractured World
Pan Macmillan Australia. 2020*

And... what are we going to do about it? That question resonates everywhere at all levels – in our own homes and neighbourhoods and right up to the whole planet. For instance, [despairing about the Western Australian wheatbelt](#) with its fractured and damaged woodlands is understandable, but that alone won't change anything. Finding ways to better conserve and restore the woodlands and their amazing plants and animals may be a long and difficult task, but positive change is possible.

Sarah Wilson points out that all sorts of different actions can make a difference. Individuals can make choices and do things that add up. And in the process help us individually and collectively to live better and more meaningful lives. Further, if you can get only 3.5 per cent of a population to participate in sustained, non-violent protest, change happens. In fact, these days, it seems to be only that sort of action that kicks governments into taking notice.

To me, "This One Wild and Precious Life" gets to the heart of the issues I want to cover in the Nature of Music. Sure, choices over which wood to use in a guitar or which guitar to buy may seem trivial when set against the huge environmental, social and health issues facing humanity. But it's been shown again and again that little things matter, that small changes get amplified as more people get on board. And music matters!

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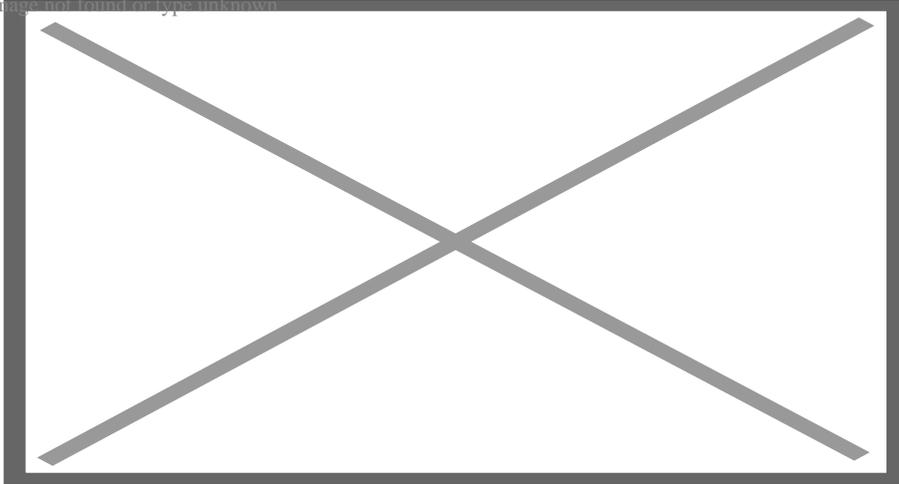


[Music Declares an Emergency](#)

Music can be a source of inspiration and motivation for people. It can help turn the spotlight on pressing issues, like [famine in Africa](#), and global climate disruption. Just recently, an initiative started by music artists, industry professionals and organisations – [Music Declares Emergency](#) – aims to galvanise action in the music industry and among fans that aims to tackle climate change in a proactive and meaningful way. This is based on the belief “*in the power of music to promote the cultural change needed to create a better future*”. And their website gives a wide range of examples of what individuals, businesses and communities can actually DO.

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the issues facing humanity, and it's also easier to ignore them and hope they'll go away. But all the evidence points to the probability that the problems won't go away unless we make them go away. And so... what are we going to do about it?

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