

Christmas episode

SPEAKERS

Jeremy Melder, Jane, Jannine, Andia Cally

Jeremy Melder 00:00

Hello, my name is Jeremy Melder, and on the presenter from Beaming Green. Before we start, I would like to acknowledge that this podcast is being held on the traditional lands of the Bundjalung people and pay our respects to elders both past, present and emerging. The Beaming Green podcast is a weekly podcast, which will help you to take out some of the stress and confusion about how to live your life more sustainably. And we do this by introducing you to people that have first hand experience and expertise in all aspects of sustainability. So you can get some amazing insights of how you can implement simple and practical solutions to enhance your life and the lives of your family. Welcome to the final episode for 2020 of the Beaming Green podcast. Now, what a year it has been and I'm sure, whilst there's been some challenging things, I think the world has been through a change that hopefully, we have learned some lessons about how we could possibly live a more sustainable life in the future. Now, this episode, we are going to be focusing on Christmas if you celebrate it, and how we can have more sustainable Christmas. And I have a special guest that's coming on. And we've also had some ideas that have been contributed by our listeners. So without further ado, let's get on with the show. So today's an exciting day for us Beaming Green because I've got my partner, Andia here, Andia Cally, who's joined us to do this special Christmas edition of Beaming Green, and what we really really want to talk about today is Christmas, gift giving and what we can do sustainably. So welcome to the show. Andia,

Andia Cally 02:12

thank you, Jeremy. It's great to be here.

Jeremy Melder 02:14

So I'm really interested to know a little bit about your childhood and Christmas and what it meant for you how it played out in your family.

Andia Cally 02:26

Yeah. Well, I think my main memory was not the gifts was mum was a very creative person. So she made us some beautiful Christmas stockings, which I've still got mine. And she also made us a lovely 12 Days of Christmas with felt and sequence and really was an amazing piece of work. And my sister and I would get excited every day because we'd take turns in opening the doors on the advent calendar, which, you know, we had until we basically taped on every little door because it had all fallen off through being overlapped. So yeah, it was just things like that. And when sharing Christmas ice cream, which was our Australian version of Christmas cake, which was a bit more refreshing than the usual Christmas cake for this climate. So yeah, just spending time with family and just those sort of things where we've good fun.

Jeremy Melder 03:18

And we're getting lots of presents.

Andia Cally 03:20

No, no, not at all, like so. So in the stocking, we just got sort of practical things like socks and undies, and you know, maybe some chocolates or something like that. Just little useful things, and then we'd get one big present. So that was about it. What about you,

Jeremy Melder 03:36

so in in because I grew up in Sri Lanka, and, you know, Santa was a big part of our life. And Santa would come through the chimney and we'd leave, you know, a glass of milk and, and some biscuits, therefore, Santa,

Andia Cally 03:53

our Santa like brandy did.

Jeremy Melder 03:56

But so say, you know, in three nickel, we didn't have it need a chimney, so but we just left it by the tree. And funnily enough, Santa would come and eat it all and the milk and drink the milk and we'd get our present, you know, so it wasn't like it is seemingly in Western society anyway, that we got a bundle of presence there was, you know, like you said, a stocking with a few little knick knacks that were given, but also just one gift. And it was really a treasured gift. I think my favorite one was, it was a beautiful thing. It was one of these things you can get into, which was an airplane was made out of I can't remember what I think. But you could wheel it around as if you were, you know, flying, but you know, with steering and things like that. And that was such a wonderful thing to get. And I was remembering that joy of all of that. I was really sad when I found out that Santa, you know, wasn't real wasn't real. Yeah, it was a bit sad about that.

Andia Cally 04:59

My older sister took delight in telling men that at a young age.

Jeremy Melder 05:05

Now, I know that you've done some research for our show regarding the statistics, and what have you found out? What have you found out about Australia?

Andia Cally 05:20

Yeah, so I just looked at Australia, because I thought, you know, in Australia is a fairly small population. But obviously, that can be expanded to other countries. So one study said that it's estimated that every Australian households waste increases up to 30%, every festive season. And that's due to the 1000s of tons of wrapping paper decorations, food bottles and unwanted presents that are being thrown out. And really,

Jeremy Melder 05:47

that's a big issue, isn't it? those unwanted presence? And I think someone was saying that they're looking at in our town of Murwillumbah, some sort of present exchange. After Christmas that right? You were saying,

Andia Cally 06:00

Yeah, it's actually before Christmas, so. So if you can take along your unused items, that can't be something that's really you know, well loved. That's still in its packaging, and everything that you haven't used, and then you can go and swap it for something else, or, you know, you can anybody can organize that after Christmas with some friends, if there's a present that you don't want. Yeah, I in our family, we always just asked for what we wanted. Because, you know, it seems pointless to try and guess all the time, especially if there's relatives that you only see once a year or once every couple of years, it's very hard to know what they're into. So, yeah, I think it's, it's probably important, even if the values don't align to get something that people want, so that they keep it

Jeremy Melder 06:44

Yeah, it's a lot of waste, or should I say it can be a lot of waste its not always the case. But what are some other stats that you found out?

Andia Cally 06:51

Yep. So Australians are now collectively spending around \$11 billion a year on Christmas, but 11 with a B billion dollars, right? That's just one country. Yeah, that's pretty staggering, really, when you think about what Christmas is about, you know, and, you know, whether you're Christian or not, which or not, but, you know, it's all about being generous and the Spirit of Jesus and you know, giving to the poor and all that sort of stuff. So it's, I sort of feel like a lot of our holidays have have become commercial ventures, you know, if even Thanksgiving in the US now is about Black Friday, and, and I remember years ago, doing research about weddings, and finding out that our honeymoon in traditional sense was basically, when the bride and groom were locked up for a week with mead and honey to try and procreate. And they were given gifts of fruits and vegetables and things like that which represented fertility and abundance. So we've gone from these very simple traditions, to, you know, just these exorbitant gifts, which, yeah, it's been crazy. And I remember years ago, being in Laos at Christmas, and seeing these kids, just playing happily with sticks and rocks, you know, pretending there were cars and, and hearing about a friend of mine, who was saying that her nieces, she's seen them cry on several occasions when they've got gifts that they're not happy with knowing it's such a contrast, you know, yeah, it

Jeremy Melder 08:21

is a contrast, isn't it? Now, one of the other things I remember about mine growing up in Sri Lanka, was that we had marbles and we draw a little square. And we tried to, you know, knock out each other's and that was took up hours of time, you know, for us, and it was gave us a lot of joy. And the other thing is that we had, you know, a spare tire with a stick, and we'd roll it down the hill very dangerously, because they could have been cars coming down. I know that, but but, you know, that's a simple pleasure, isn't it, you know, of some, you know, that we can get some joy out of, but these days, it's got more and more complex, because we need to have, I don't know, what are the games Nintendo games? And I

don't know, I can't even tell you what they are. But there's so many of them in terms of diversions in life...I call them. Yeah. Rather than, you know, stimulating the brain.

Andia Cally 09:16

And I think Yeah, and I think that's, that's it is that those games leave little to the imagination, because these days, you know, it's all 4k video, and it's all there for you. The same with a lot of films, whereas, you know, they, I rightly read a few years ago that you don't create memories when you're watching TV, and probably you don't either when you're playing a game. So I think it's really nice to give people experiences for Christmas, because that's something that they will remember, you know, if it's a workshop or a voucher, or you know, a flying lesson or something like that, that they will remember, rather than a gift that they kind of put on the shelf and, you know, take the next one out and yeah, they don't really think much about it. Yeah.

Jeremy Melder 10:00

Yeah, now we, in preparing for the show, we asked some of our followers to come back with a couple of suggestions as to what they think would be good for Christmas. And I had Michelle, who suggested connection with others was sufficient? Absolutely. And I think that's very true. Because if you go into the thing you were saying, you know, the Christian tradition is it's all about Christ and, and the Spirit of Christ being celebrated. And it was all about being with one another and being in prayer, and being in gratitude. And I think that's a really good suggestion, Michelle, that, and thanks for sharing that on the show.

Andia Cally 10:45

Absolutely. Yeah, I think I think everybody gets so stressed around Christmas. And I remember years ago with my family, where everyone was very stressed, and sort of niggling at each other, and I said, let's just go around the circle, and give an appreciation of each other, and they were all very reluctant, but they got into it and and just sort of lifted the whole mood, you know, that's, I think it's important to, to remember why we're there. And to celebrate family, this will be my first Christmas without my mom. So it's gonna be a little bit sad. But, yeah, just to be grateful for the family that you do have.

Jeremy Melder 11:18

Yeah, absolutely. And, and there's always a lot of people worse off than we are. Yes. You know, especially in a third world country where, you know, you know, people don't have a lot of money to be able to spend on gifts, let alone food. Yes. And then think about this for people in refugee camps, millions of people that are in refugee camps, and there's people that are homeless, you know, so there's always someone a lot worse off. And we've been through a pretty tough year worldwide with COVID-19. And it's really about celebrating the simple things. And I think all of us who have felt isolated, or are still in isolation, are, wanting that connection with other people. And there's something about that isn't the intended connection Andia? Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. So next person that came up with some ideas was Harry, now Harry grew up. And he said the, the best gift that he ever got was wooden blocks. Right? And that he says that there are perfect sustainable gift that can go on from generation to generation because they can be hand me downs. So Harry decided to replicate what he had. And he's got six grandchildren, he decided to make six sets of, of blocks for them. And Harry

works with children, young children, and he says that he uses them in his clinic, to, for the kids to, you know, use their skills in building learn that how to build and also add a bit of creativity into what they do.

Andia Cally 13:08

Yeah, fantastic.

Jeremy Melder 13:10

So there are simple ideas out there of what we can do.

Andia Cally 13:13

Yeah, and i think that that's exactly what I was saying at the start, you know, bringing creativity into it. There are so many ideas on the internet now, like on Pinterest and things like that, where you can make your own gifts or you can you know, we were giving the gift of honey this year.

Jeremy Melder 13:33

Shhh, don't tell anyone

Andia Cally 13:35

and that's something that we've made you know, yeah. And and it's, it's lovely to if you are like foods and easy gift to give Yes. Because it's something that everybody eats and trying to find something that you know is homemade with love and that will probably keep for more than a week. Yeah, is just you know, a lovely thing and I don't know about you, but I personally really appreciate if somebody's taking the time to make something and put the effort in it. I think it's much more personal.

Jeremy Melder 14:08

Okay, now let's have a listen. We had a couple of people I think some people are a bit scared of speaking and hearing their voice live on a podcast. So I'm just gonna put Jane on now. And let's listen to what she had to say

Jane 14:24

hello Beaming Green Jane from Wales here in the UK am turn the electricity off for 24 hours and have a candle lit Christmas. Bit more relevant in the UK where it will be really dark and you can enjoy the candlelight, the atmosphere. Second hand shops. It really is much more carbon friendly. To buy secondhand things. A vegan Christmas there's so many amazing vegan products a local Christmas buying Things food and presence only from local sources. And charities. buying gifts for other people in developing countries, like a goat, or a toilet. There are so many different ideas. I'm going to use some of them. Thanks very much. Bye.

Jeremy Melder 15:24

So those are some pretty good ideas there that Jane had isn't there?

Andia Cally 15:29

That was a wealth of ideas. Oh, yeah.

Jeremy Melder 15:31

That I and you're a vegan. I am conscious vegan. And that's a great idea. And giving to a charity is another great idea.

Andia Cally 15:45

Yeah. So maybe you want to share the gift that you gave?

Jeremy Melder 15:49

Yes. So I'd love to. So there's an organization called Kiva. So shout out to kiva.org. And they in they work in the third world, and they help people that want to set up a business to get them some funding. So I provided I think, is \$50. And they're all trying to raise like \$1,000, or, you know, or \$500 for enterprises. But you're giving this gift as a collective, and they repay you that money once the business gets off the ground. And I've got to say, I've paid three or four times for different ventures in different countries and I've being paid back. So last year, I decided to give my children the gift of, you know, I think it was \$50 each or something like that, but so they can give it to someone that's in need in a third world country. And I haven't heard I'll find out this Christmas how they went with that. But I think that's a great idea.

Andia Cally 16:55

Absolutely. And it's great to have that follow through and to sort of have that connection to know where your money's going. And, yeah, and how it's tracking. That's fantastic.

Jeremy Melder 17:04

Now, there was some other ideas that Jane had as well, wasn't there,

Andia Cally 17:07

then the candle idea? I really like that that intimate idea. But also, I was thinking today, you know, solar lights are a good alternative to, you know, the normal fairy lights that sort of a battery operated. I loved her buying local idea, because I think it's really important to support locals.

Jeremy Melder 17:26

Yeah. A lot of businesses, especially after COVID have been suffering as well.

Andia Cally 17:31

That's right. And I was I was thinking today on a sort of slightly lighter note that Santa is not very sustainable when you think about it, because he's traveling from the north pole to go to all these places. Yeah, all over the world. There's lots of reindeer miles in there. So

Jeremy Melder 17:45

yeah, you know, those poor reindeer? So that's right. Yeah, it's a long way to go.

Andia Cally 17:50

But another great idea, which I came across today was, I guess, the the idea of inkind giving. So instead of doing the Kris Kringle work and everything, where you get given somebody's name, and

you've got to buy a gift up to the value of a certain amount, which again, can be difficult, if you don't know the person very well, is to actually just, you know, offer services. So say, I'll do your dishes for the next week, or I'll get your coffee for the next two weeks or something like that. So it's more of an in kind, personal service, then, and that doesn't cost you anything, but I'm sure it will be greatly appreciated.

Jeremy Melder 18:28

And there was some other thing we were talking about earlier about wrapping paper.

Andia Cally 18:33

Oh, yes. Yes. So this is a pretty stark statistic, I think, is that Australians use more than 150,000 kilometers of wrapping paper during Christmas. And that's enough to wrap around the Earth's equator nearly four times. So that's a lot of paper. Right? That's just Australia. You know, think about all those trees. I know. So, you know, I think a couple of years ago, when we were making Boomerang bags, I started to get creative with my wrapping, and use some of those materials. And then, you know, just wrap them in a nice piece of ribbon or even take a you know, patent piece of material to wrap around it. There's a great technique, a Japanese technique called for Shiki foro Shiki to know if I'm pronouncing that right. And there's all these different it's a bit like origami or something. So there's all these different sort of techniques online that you can, you can have a look at. And if you do that, then obviously you're avoiding using masking tape or sticky tape, which is another form of plastic so so and they look beautiful, you know? Yeah, really nice. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Jeremy Melder 19:45

Now, we also have one more person that's spoken from the UK Jannine Baron, and an Australian in the UK. And so let's hear what Jannine has to say.

Jannine 20:01

This year my clients are getting a tree planted. And as I am in the UK, I'm donating to the woodland trust, which is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity. They've planted 43 million trees since 1972. And they're on a mission to plant another 50 million in the next 10 years upping their game because the UK needs to increase woodland by 30%, so I'm going to contribute to that goal.

Jeremy Melder 20:34

Now, that's a good idea. Isn't it?

Andia Cally 20:36

Fantastic. That would offset all that wrapping paper, wouldn't it? Yeah. If everybody did that. Yeah, that's great. We

Jeremy Melder 20:42

really need more trays. I mean, the amount the right if anyone watched the latest. David Attenborough, Sir David Attenborough program about the amount of trees that we are taking off this planet. Well, we need to start planning a hell of a lot more to do something about that. And it's really important. So if we were able to give a gift of a train, that would be a wonderful gift. Hopefully, it'll last for 50, 60,70 years, longer than we would maybe live. Yeah. Yeah.

Andia Cally 21:16

And plants are a really nice gift to give today. 40 Yeah. Oh, yeah. Even even food, you know, like, grow your own food sort of thing. Yeah. Great. Great, sustainable idea. Yeah. Yep.

Jeremy Melder 21:31

Now if you've got any other magical ideas, Andia,

Andia Cally 21:34

well, I just wanted to talk about food because food is a big issue. food wastage. So if you think about an average family, that it's really difficult for them to eat an entire leg of lamb or five kilograms of prawns before the new year. So food wastage, there's about estimated over 500 sorry, 5 million tons of food ending up in landfill each year, which is enough to fill 9000 Olympic sized swimming pools.

Jeremy Melder 22:03

This isn't just in Australia.

Andia Cally 22:05

Yes, that is just in Australia. So that is a lot It is. It is phenomenal. I know. And and the thing is that Land, food does not have to go into landfill No. And and it's such a great form of compost. So you know, you can you can create free compost on site. Yeah, that will feed your garden. And you know, it's a win win situation. So I reckon a compost bin, or a worm farm is a fantastic Christmas gift. Absolutely.

Jeremy Melder 22:37

I mean, we've got four on our property here from Yep, that's right. And, and we use it in our garbage bin that goes out on a weekly basis is probably doesn't have to go out every week. We basically using their own compost and putting it into our garden. And you know, it's a really good idea to do that. So compost bins, another good idea for someone the gift

Andia Cally 23:00

that keeps giving Yeah, and then, you know, I just wanted to talk as well about Christmas trees. Because each year I like to challenge myself and create a different sort of Christmas tree. So I've never bought a plastic Christmas tree, and I never will. I've bought many live ones before, but usually they don't survive. So this year, there was a big fallen frong from Palm tree, one of those sort of stiffer parts of the palm trees, I've decorated that you know, and put the lights around it and, and it's fun, you know, or you can just have a vase one year we did that with twigs. Yeah. And you know, you just position the twigs in different ways. Or you can make one out of driftwood or you know, and the same with the decorations, because you know, what, what's the point in buying and tacky plastic decorations, especially if they're dated with a year or something when you can just make your own with felt and, you know, a bit of love and some nice threads and things like that. And yeah, decorate your Christmas presents with a pine cone or a sprig of something, a sprig of rosemary or something like that.

Jeremy Melder 24:11

I think it's also like,, a lot of people are saying that they're really busy. And don't have time to do all this other sort of thing. But, you know, we do have to make time. Because if we don't make time, there's going to be a big issue with our planet because of the amount of resources that we use using. Because we're so busy. And try we're time poor, it's actually creating more of a mess for our environment. And I think we need to be a bit more conscious, absolutely about the time that we don't put into these things.

Andia Cally 24:49

Well, I think I think you know, if you think about it logically, it can be a beautiful thing that you can do with your kids, you know, to make some of these things to make ornaments and to make Wrapping and it's something that you then get a sense of satisfaction out of, and I'm sure the person who's receiving it does too, but you feel like you know, you've done something, you've made something creative, and you've repurpose something. And, you know, there's, there's lots of other things that you can think about with your Christmas table to have, you know, using containers instead of clingfilm, and using cloth napkins, not disposable napkins and things like that. So if we all just did our beat and thrown about, you know, all those things that that cumulative effect, I think, you know, you can't help but feel a sense of satisfaction, absolutely.

Jeremy Melder 25:39

I was just gonna say, my, my worst memories of, you know, looking at Christmas and going, Oh, my God, I've got to go shopping, I don't want to worry about the car park, people's anxiety levels are high, people are agitated. And, you know, you're amongst a shopping center with everyone that's agitated. And, you know, I don't think that's a really good outcome for Christmas, because what we're trying to achieve is peace, harmony with our family and giving something from a good place a good heart. So the idea of, you know, sharing homemade gifts and, and, and adding value, and it's from your heart is more valuable than something that you've just thought about for two minutes. So that's a good little present to give it to someone. And the person that gets it doesn't really seem to value it as well, I would value it more if I knew that, you know, you had made something made an effort to make that for me, rather than just spending two minutes on buying this product.

Andia Cally 26:49

That's right. And remember, a couple of years ago, we both my calendars for our families, and then so we put all their own photography in there. And so that was something that's useful that people can use all year round. But then it's also a way of sharing, you know, what you love doing, you know, the nature of photography, or people and things like that. So that was really, really appreciated. And I think, yeah, there's so many ideas on the internet now of things that you can do in absolutely, you know, ways that you can repurpose your leftovers, or, you know, make gifts and make decorations. So yeah, it's just time to get creative now.

Jeremy Melder 27:26

Yep. Now we're running out a bit of time. Have you got any other burning things that you'd like to share? Andia,

Andia Cally 27:33

well, look, there's just something that I want to encourage people to think really carefully about is a Christmas gift. And that's pets. Hmm. Oh, that's

Jeremy Melder 27:40

a good thing. Yeah.

Andia Cally 27:42

So I mean, you know, I'm an animal lover, and I know a lot of people even during COVID have bought puppies that we know. And they're adorable. And it's, you know, it's a great thing to do. But I, you know, I just really urge people to think carefully about how much time they can put into, you know, that animal and whether they're working full time, whether it's a dog that needs a lot of exercise, if it is a dog, you know, and whether it's a rescue dog, and all that sort of stuff. I mean, there's lots of things to consider, you know, as I say, an animal isn't just for Christmas, it's really something that needs careful consideration, because I think it's just heartbreaking to hear how a lot of animals are surrendered after Christmas.

Jeremy Melder 28:25

Absolutely. I mean, that is, that is an awful statistic. You know, I've got a friend that worked at the local pound. And he was telling me that there's a number of people that get gifts for dogs, and then six weeks later, they're in the pound. So and animals in West are getting more and more expensive. So you gotta want to hang on to her for a while. And also think there is also long term costs of, you know, medical bills and things like that. So it's a lovely gift, if someone can care for it. Now, the other thing I remember seeing in a film was before you get yourself a gift of a dog by a pot plant and see if you can look after it alive, keep it alive for at least six months, and then make the decision to buy yourself an animal.

Andia Cally 29:11

That's right, then I know that, you know, there's so many kids that promise the world to their parents and say that they'll you know, look after the animal and then they sort of lose interest. So

Jeremy Melder 29:21

I was one of those kids Look Andia I really appreciate your time on Beaming Green. And I'm really grateful that you're my partner. And thank you so much for sharing your insights. And just to let all our listeners know that I'm going to have a short break and we'll be back in the middle of January. And I've got some really exciting people that I'm talking to. So I look forward to seeing you in January. Have a lovely, lovely Christmas, and a safe Christmas, and a blessed one,

Andia Cally 29:56

and a sustainable and a sustainable one. Thank you Jeremy.

Jeremy Melder 30:06

Thank you for being part of the Beaming Green podcast. The music for his podcast is produced by Dave Weir now we need more people to get on board and raise awareness about sustainability and climate change, the more of us that are shining the light on these issues, the more government and

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