

# ANTI-CONSUMERISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST

*A THREE-YEAR PROJECT FUNDED BY THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL*

*Why are many people in Western countries becoming so concerned about high levels of consumption and a culture of materialism?*

*How have people within some of the world's economically wealthy nations come together as concerned citizens, advocates and activists in order to do something about 'Western consumerism'?*

**This project is designed to document the emerging politics of 'anti-consumerism' within Western countries.**

*Over the past decade Western consumption and materialism has been the subject of much criticism and political action. Critics and activists within and beyond western nations have emphasised the negative global, social and environmental consequences of a culture of consumerism and overconsumption. At a grass-roots level this concern has been expressed in the ongoing actions of a variety of non-government organisations and activist groups or alliances.*

**This project wants to know about these actions and the ideas behind them. We want to look at the present state of anti-consumerist politics within western countries – and beyond - by talking to those involved in opposing high levels of consumption.**

*By documenting and analysing the broad politics of anti-consumerism within a range of countries, we hope to contribute to contemporary international debate regarding the social/environmental impact of consumerism and the global dangers of limitless economic growth.*

**The international focus of such as study is unique and we hope you will become involved.....**

## WHO ARE WE?

### Kim Humphery



Kim is the Chief Investigator on the project and has a long-standing interest in theories and practices of consumption, an interest he has pursued as a student and teacher in both Australia and England. He has published widely in this area and his recent work has shifted more fully towards exploring the nature of Western materialism and the renewed politics of overconsumption based on concerns about the social, personal and environmental costs of global commodity capitalism.

At RMIT, Kim teaches history and social theory and coordinates a course entitled 'Western Materialism'. Besides his work on consumption, Kim has a background in social research in the area of Indigenous health and, in this context, he has worked in the Northern Territory and Victoria. He brings this interest in issues of health and wellbeing to the study of consumption and to his parallel research work on the sustainability of communities in Australia and Malaysia, work being undertaken within the Globalism Institute at RMIT University.

Further details about Kim can be accessed through the RMIT staff profiles at: [kim.humphery@rmit.edu.au](mailto:kim.humphery@rmit.edu.au)

### Ferne Edwards



Ferne is the research officer for the 'Anti-consumerism in the Contemporary West' project. She has studied anthropology, international environmental management and the Spanish language at the Universities of Queensland, Melbourne, RMIT and Salamanca, Spain. Her interest in the anti-consumerist movement and its link to environmentalism is reflected in her honours degree in environmental anthropology, which explored the politics of organic food production, and in her work with Friends of the Earth, Melbourne, Raleigh International, Chile and the Sustainability Network, Melbourne. Ferne's current research interests include human ecology, contemporary Western social movements, and the anthropology of food. Ferne has travelled extensively throughout the developed and developing worlds and is currently completing her Masters in Social Science at RMIT.

Ferne can be contacted at: [ferne.edwards@rmit.edu.au](mailto:ferne.edwards@rmit.edu.au)

### Kelly Donati



Kelly joined the Globalism Institute at RMIT in 2005. She originally came from Montreal, Canada where she studied film/cultural theory and women's studies at McGill University, arriving in Melbourne seven years ago to undertake postgraduate studies at Monash University with a focus on psychoanalytic theory and feminist philosophy.

Through her work and recent research, she has developed an interest in the centrality of food and water to our cultural and ecological wellbeing. In 2002, Kelly completed an MA in the innovative Gastronomy program in the Department of History and Politics at Adelaide University where her research focused on the philosophy of pleasure in the Slow Food movement and explored the ethical, ecological and political dimensions

of food production and consumption. Drawing on her previous research in social and cultural theory, Kelly is particularly interested in examining the relationship between agriculture/food policy (regionally and globally) and food culture, with a particular focus on community sustainability and food sovereignty.

## **CONTACTING US**

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## **WE HAVE A WEBSITE**

**[www.rmit.edu.au/anticonsumerism](http://www.rmit.edu.au/anticonsumerism)**