

Preface

This book is about the future survival prospects of our species, *Homo sapiens*, in the twenty-first century.

It deals with the compound challenge of the ten greatest threats to our existence we humans have faced in the past million years—and what we can sensibly do about them.

It presents fresh evidence, from trusted scientific sources, to shine a light on the nature of the risks our vast numbers and overwhelming demands on the Planet are bringing upon us. It explores our strengths and weaknesses as a species in facing them.

These challenges are now so profound that I am constantly meeting people, all over the world—scientists, grandparents, young people—who are pessimistic, if not despairing, about the future we are leaving to our children, and to their children.

But this isn't simply a book about problems. It's absolutely about solutions. It is about hope—though a hope that is well founded, on fact and science, not simply on belief, ignorance or wishful thinking.

It's about how we humans can arrive at a common, clear insight into the nature of our greatest test—and into our own natures—in order to work together as a species to solve it and prosper.

It's about the very thing we humans have always done best: understand and find co-operative solutions to life-threatening challenges.

In exploring our greatest risks, this book does not pretend to predict the future. That's not possible. It simply presents the best evidence, arguing that a sound awareness of those risks gives us greater influence over our future and the options we have for shaping it. Each chapter concludes with clear advice on what can be done at global level but also what individuals can do

for themselves to make a global difference. Importantly, it seeks to integrate these solutions, instead of trying to solve our problems piecemeal—which only leads to more intractable problems. The book doesn't claim to have all the answers, by any stretch. But it does gather some of the world's clearest thinking about them, as a start. It aims to help build the discussion about survival we have to have.

And it offers a practical way forward, one that can engage every member of our species.

I acknowledge a special debt to the ideas and inspiration of the late Professor Tony McMichael, Professor Paul Ehrlich, Professor Hugh Possingham, Professor Terry Hughes, Professor Will Steffen, Professor Ravi Naidu, Professor Ming Hung Wong, Professor Alon Tal, Professor Bob Douglas, Bill McKibben, Major-General Michael Jeffery, Professor Clive Hamilton, Professor Ian Lowe, Gerda Verburg, Sherestha Saini, Dr. Sean Coffey, Dr. Dennis Hussey, Ian Dunlop, Bill D'Arcy, Peter Day, Dr Mark Stafford-Smith, Dr. Alex Ritchie, Dr. Adrian Gibbs, Dr. Ian Chambers, Richard Heinberg, Professor EO Wilson and David Suzuki.

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Surviving the 21st Century

Humanity's Ten Great Challenges and How We Can
Overcome Them

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2017, XIV, 255 p. 17 illus. in color., Softcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-41269-6