

Matthew Nott I remember hearing about Arthur Stace and Eternity, my one of my little sisters was a movie buff and and she alerted me to that, to the movie about Arthur Stace and, and the sort of, the mysterious legend of the man who would go around on pavements and writing the word Eternity. It was, it was a great concept. And so I've known about the word for, for a long time.

Matthew Nott There was a documentary about Arthur Stace and Eternity, I think, about 10 years ago.

Matthew Nott Oh, look, I thought it was a very emotive concept, this this mysterious figure, you know, only a few photos of him. No one really knew much about him, about his, his upbringing and and and he'd created this sort of fleeting message that became such an enduring message as well. And to the point where it's Eternity he's been become quite an iconic Australian word because of Arthur Stace. The, what, what a powerful message this guy's created.

Matthew Nott Oh, I'd heard about Eternity probably. probably whilst I was at school, I never saw an Eternity sign. I've never, never seen one. I think there is one still in existence, which I think is held at the Town Hall in Sydney. So one one of his images remain, but that was the beauty of all these messages that they just disappeared by within a couple of days, with people walking over the pavement, you know a message written in chalk, a profound message, a strong word gone within a couple of days. It's a really nice sort of almost haunting message.

Matthew Nott I just think I just think it's, you know, Arthur Stace was a very understated guy. He just seemed, seemed to do most of this at night, didn't want any, any fame, wrote the word, a mysterious word that would appear one day and be gone the next. And when it's a strong, strong word like Eternity, I think that's a really powerful combination. The fact that it's here one day and gone the next, but but a strong message, I think that's and you can see how it's become such an Australian word. When it was used in Sydney for the 2000 New Year's New Year's Eve celebrations on Sydney Harbour. You know, it's become a real Australian Australian word

Matthew Nott Well, I remember the Millennium fireworks 2000 Sydney Sydney fireworks, a great display, as always, and Eternity appearing on the Sydney Harbour Bridge was that was a pretty profound message and a great homage to Arthur Stace, who created these words on a pavement and it, suddenly there it is, emblazoned on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Fantastic. And it just goes to show sometimes what you can achieve is a quiet achiever, just doing something he was passionate about. And look what an impact it's had.

Matthew Nott No, I wasn't until I was here, actually in Tathra, watching the Millennium 2000 New Year's celebrations on TV and there Eternity came up. It was, it was a powerful moment.

Matthew Nott So I'm I'm an orthopaedic surgeon. I fix arthritic hips and straighten bent bones, basically. And I've been living in Tathra for about 25 years. Always wanted to be an orthopaedic surgeon on the south, south coast of New South Wales. And I love living down here. It's busy. I work, work hard. There's lots of bent bones coming in through the emergency department and lots of people with arthritis. So you know where we've got a good team here in Bega, we've got to set up a great orthopaedic unit and a great place to live. So I'm pretty happy that I've landed on the far south coast as an orthopaedic surgeon, been able to make a career for myself and live in one of the most beautiful spots on the planet, in my opinion.

Matthew Nott Well, there's quite a long story behind that (when Matthew started using Eternity). So I became I became interested in climate change in 2006, and I was sitting sitting on the on Tathra Beach on New Year's Day reading Tim Flannery's *The Weather Makers*. And so I read through his book, I read it in a day, and it was a bad day to start reading a book about climate change because it was the hottest day ever recorded at the Tathra Surf Club by four degrees. It was a stinking hot New Year's Day 2006 reading a book about climate change. It all seemed to make sense. It wasn't that complicated, and the carbon dioxide is an atmospheric, is a greenhouse gas. Atmospheric carbon dioxide going up because of human activity, which is warming the planet, which is rising sea levels, which is changing rainfall patterns, you know, all sorts of ramifications of a warming planet. I read it and I thought, I'm going to tell someone about this. This is, you know, this is such an obvious threat. And so my wife very wisely said, I better read more than one book about it. So I spent five months reading everything I could about climate change came to a very, very firm conclusion that it was a real threat, that the threat was obvious and we had a simple solution. And so then I thought, Well, what am I going to do now? And I didn't really know what to do. I thought, What about a human sign on to Tathra Beach?

Matthew Nott So I thought, what about a human signed on Tathra Beach? I'd never done a human sign before. I'd never even seen a human sign and thought, Oh well, I'll give it a crack. So five months after first reading Tim Flannery's *The Weather Makers*, we got 3000 people to come down to Tathra Beach, Tathra's got a population of about a thousand, so we almost tripled the population of the town for the day. And we did a human sign. And that human sign was Clean Energy for Eternity. And, you know, sounded like a bit of a sound like a good slogan. Clean energy that was the way forward for Eternity. You know, if we want one to look after our the future for our for our grandkids, we've got to be thinking about solving this climate crisis. And one of the ways to do that is with clean energy. So Clean Energy for Eternity that that was my first action on climate change. And with 3000 people turning up, I thought we were onto a good thing. I thought we thought we were, we had a message that was striking a chord with people. And so then we formed the community group Clean Energy for Eternity, and we've been going hard since 2006, trying to raise awareness about climate change, trying to look at community solutions to the problem. We're trying to set targets for our emissions reduction targets for our region, trying to set up community buildings with solar panels. We've created Australia's largest solar sculpture, which is down at the sewerage works. It's a solar, 30 kilowatt solar farm that reads the word "Imagine" when you read it from, when you see it from the air. So we've been working hard doing what we can as a small community to try and come up with solutions to climate change, put ourselves in a position of leadership when it comes to climate change. And we think being in a

position of leadership puts our advantage at a real, our region at a huge advantage in terms of attracting renewable energy jobs to our part of the world. And that's a big part of our message is when you look at the economic threats of COVID and the bushfires and the impact that climate change is going to have on us, we want to look at how we can keep our region vibrant. And and I think one great way to do that is to attract renewable energy jobs to our part of the world where we can attract tradies, electricians, down here installing solar panels, building wind farms, constructing pumped hydro stations, installing battery storage plants, which we can do at a community level that's going to bring jobs into our town. It's going to keep young families in our region. It's going to keep our schools full. It's going to keep our sporting clubs active. What better way in a time of a climate crisis than to be putting our regional position of leadership attracting jobs? We've got all the ingredients in our part of the world to set ourselves up so that we can produce all our energy from renewable energy and store it. We've got a great solar resource. We've got wind, we've got biomass with the dairy industry. We've got great options for pumped hydro facilities for storage of renewable energy. We've got it all down here, and we want it all down here, we want the jobs down here. We want we want to keep our town's full, busy, vibrant and and one way to do that is with renewable energy, which is why we've set up a 100 percent renewable energy target by 2030. And we've actually got council to, the local Bega Valley Shire Council to adopt that target or at least incorporate it into that climate strategy. So I think we're making some, we've made some inroads. We've started setting ourselves up and putting ourselves up in a position of leadership

Matthew Nott Well, I think Eternity is a really, really strong word to use when you're talking about climate change, when you look at the last IPCC report. Twenty, 2020 or 2019, when they looked at the planet becoming 1.5 degrees warmer by the end of this decade, two degrees warmer by mid-century, and they describe a two degree warming as catastrophic. Mid-century is not that far away and a four degree warming by the end of the century, and the four degree warming is going to, it's going to be very difficult to have organised human civilisation in a planet that's four degrees warmer. So we face an existential threat. You know, my kids, when they're my age, are going to be living in a climate that's described as catastrophic by the IPCC. That's not Eternity. That's an existential threat and to fix that, if we want Eternity, if I want my kids to have the same sort of environment that I grew up in, we've got to, we have to fight for it. We have to, we have to look at immediate solutions to climate change. If my grandkids want to have the same life expectancy as me, so I'm fighting for Eternity, I'm fighting for a a a climate where my grandkids don't have to worry about the next summer living in dread of the next bushfire season, where they can go skiing in the winter and and know that they're going to be able to ski on real snow and not be worried about rising sea levels.

Matthew Nott We're fighting for, I think. No, no. I think I want to fight for it. I'll go blood and tooth with this one. So so what what I want with our campaign is, is to help us create a climate that my kids and my grandkids can can thrive in where they don't have to, don't have to be worried about the next bushfire season where they can go skiing in the winter. They don't have to be worried about rising sea levels and the death of the Great Barrier Reef and changing rainfall patterns, droughts, floods. My my kids don't don't

deserve to have to worry about that year after year, and it's a problem we can fix. It's something that is imminently fixable. We've got the technology to move right now. And so what

Matthew Nott our group is fighting for is Eternity, a climate where my kids can thrive, when my grandkids can thrive and don't have to worry about the next climate disaster. We are fighting for Eternity.

Matthew Nott OK. We are fighting as a community group. We are fighting for a climate that will last for an eternity.

Matthew Nott So we as a community group have been involved in about 100 human signs now, and it seemed to be quite a good way to get people together. It's a good demonstration of what you can do as an individual. You know, it's always a worry with climate change, you think, well, does it really make a difference if I act as an individual. And then when you get a get a thousand people on the beach together, well, you can demonstrate that it does matter as an individual. When you get together with other individuals and you work together as a community, you can create a strong message for change. And so we've been involved in about 100 human signs now saying various things. We used the word now that's that's a big part of our campaign. So we've done about 50 human signs that make the word now. And imagine also is a big part of our campaign. So we've got the word Eternity, the word now and the word imagine. Three strong words that we use a lot. In fact, our very first human sign on the beach when we managed to get 3000 people to write the word Clean Energy for Eternity, we then, in a logistical triumph, shuffled everyone around in the case, in the space of about 10 minutes to form the word imagine. And then and that's why we decided to make our solar farm in Tathra using the word imagine. So it's I think it's a it's a good way to show people that you do have power as an individual when you get together. I don't know. That doesn't doesn't quite make sense, but I think individual actions do matter. Getting a community together, community action. This is this is a real ground up approach to tackling a very difficult problem. And it's a ground up approach because I am frustrated at political inaction over climate change. A refusal to accept the challenge. Always looking for excuses for inaction. And the one that really drives me crazy is that we're only a small part of the problem, so no one's going to notice if we're not a part of the solution. I think that that Australian political attitude drives me crazy, and I think they've got it wrong. I think I think and that's why we're trying to get our community together to demonstrate to our politicians that actually it does make a difference when you're proactive about climate change. And the big difference, of course, is we're attracting jobs. We're creating jobs in South Eastern New South Wales. This is all about regional rejuvenation.

Matthew Nott so. Oh yeah. I was very taken with Arthur Stace, and he's just the way quietly went around writing Eternity in chalk on the pavement. That ephemeral message that disappeared after 48 hours. And I thought, and it was, it was COVID, it was time, COVID had just arrived. And and so we couldn't do any human sign. We couldn't get people together to do human signs. I thought, Well, look, I'll just go out and I'm going to scratch the word Eternity in the sand and then just watch it disappear with the tide. Just

like Arthur Stace would watch his chalk marks disappear. That that ephemeral message took me a couple of hours to mark it out on the, on the, on the beach. And then I watched it disappear within a couple of hours and was completely gone by the by the first rise of the tide. And I quite like that just that fleeting moment in time.

Matthew Nott Well, when we did the very first human sign, Clean Energy for Eternity, never done a human sign before. We really wanted to write it in that beautiful copperplate script that he used, but it was just too difficult. First human sign ever we wrote the word Eternity in uppercase letters. And I regret regretted that and always wanted to come back and use Arthur Stace's beautiful copperplate script that just flows, flows across the pavement, flows across across the beach. And it's just it's it's the word itself is a work of art. I think.

Matthew Nott Well, I'd like to think there's some sort of mutual respect there. You know, Arthur Stace went about his job quietly, understated, in the night, and I think our organisation, Clean Energy for Eternity, has a similar sort of attitude in that we're just going quietly around putting solar panels on community buildings. We've done we've done 15 Rural Fire Service sheds. We've done all the surf clubs in south east of New South Wales with solar panels. We've done schools, we've done churches. We've done community halls, about 30 community halls with solar panels. We're just quietly going around solving the climate crisis. Solar panel by solar panel.

Matthew Nott I think the. So when I scratched the Eternity sign out on the beach, it was all pretty awkward. I did it all by eyeball and I had a drone in the air, so it's trying to fly the drone whilst scratching the sign out on the beach. It was very complicated. And the tide was coming in, so I didn't have much time, but I managed to do it. It took me about two hours to mark it all out and scratch it out. The the the E was 12 metres high, so it's a 12 metre wide sign, and that's wide. The height. The E is 12 metres high. I think the word is, Oh, I'm not sure. Now there's that 20 metres, 20 metres wide. Yeah. And so I raked it out. It's a tricky thing to do because when you're raking a sign in the sand, you can't make a mistake because you can't erase it. It's just not possible to erase a mistake. So I had one go at it and I just I eyeballed it and watched it with my, on my drone footage, marking the sign out and I reckon it looked pretty good in the end.

Matthew Nott Oh, it's great fun. It was a hoot. I had a couple of people walk, wander past on the beach wondering what I was doing and I wouldn't tell them. But it was, it was great fun. And that one of the tricks is, not only is it impossible to erase a mistake, but you've got to be really careful with your footprints everywhere. So it's quite a delicate art, so trying to walk in the sign without putting footprints outside of the words. It was quite quite a tricky business and and it it took took a couple of hours to get it done.

Matthew Nott I think if there is such a thing as heaven, perhaps Arthur Stace just had a little grin on his face.

Matthew Nott Well, I'd like to be known as the environmental Arthur. No, no one's ever said that until right now. No, you know, I guess the difference is that we're, you know, we're going about our business solar panel by solar panel, but we're also fight, fighting from from the from the from the soapbox. We're trying to get the message out there. So we're actually trying to be as loud as we can be in drawing our community's attention to the fact that being proactive about climate change is an opportunity for us. Climate change is a huge opportunity. And you know, you look at these students protesting in the streets and they're look, really showing leadership. I think, I think full marks to them. When, in over the course of history, as has revolution been created by students. I guess there are examples of that, but this is a really strong example of students standing up and saying, we want to fight for our future climate. And these students, these students aren't interested in politics, and I don't think they're actually really scared about climate change. I think climate change is so exciting. We have such an opportunity here to transition to a low carbon economy. People are not scared about climate change. People are scared about political inaction on climate change. And I think that's why we're shouting from the rafters. You know, come on, let's let's get let's get going with this because this is exciting. Climate change. The changes we need to make are so exciting. You know, every house with a solar panel, every we've got community power banks with battery storage, build a pumped hydro station up on the Brown Mountain that can store more than all the energy that our region needs. A couple of wind farms around even an offshore wind, wind wind farm and and we are rocketing towards being a net producer of energy. All our energy comes down to to us from the Hunter Valley, and we're the end of the line from the Hunter Hunter Valley fossil fuel industry. Let's turn the direction of that cable around and send the Hunter Valley electrons that we make down here from renewable energy and let's let's reap the rewards of that. It's a no brainer.

Matthew Nott Well, this is how we're going to provide so, you know, being proactive about climate change, looking at putting ourselves in a position of leadership, attracting jobs here. That's how we look at Eternity. That's how we look at a sustainable future, a sustainable climate and the sort of that's how we create a world that I want my grandkids to grow up in. That is Eternity when my grandkids have the same sort of opportunities that I had from a from an economic and environmental point of view.

Matthew Nott Eternity So Eternity very strong word. Big part of a campaign. You know, if we want, if we want.

Matthew Nott Yeah, OK. So big, big, big word for a strong word, if we want Eternity as a as a civilisation, we need clean energy and we need we need it now

Matthew Nott So our very first human sign, Clean Energy for Eternity on Tathra Beach, it was an absolute cracker. It was so nerve wracking. I've managed to get a few people to help me organise it. We had Clean Energy for Eternity, is a big human sign, there's a lot of letters in there. And I had no idea how many people were going to turn up. Could have been five people could have been 10000. I had no idea how many people we, were going to turn up. We had a plane booked to photograph it, and this was before the days of drones. So the plane was going to be flying overhead at 11 o'clock and it was going to circle for 10 minutes and take some photos of whatever we managed to assemble. And I remember I was walking around the beach with an ABC reporter following me

at 10:10 and the planes due due to fly in 50 minutes and and she's following me around. I'm looking around and there was about 10 people on the beach. And I just felt a bit faint, and I thought this is just going to be a complete disaster. And at about 20 past 10, people started to roll up and they just poured, people just poured onto the beach and we line them up. And in about 20 minutes, we lined up 3000 people to form the word Clean Energy for Eternity. And it just, we had exactly the right number of people. It was amazing. And and it was a particularly dramatic day because we did the sign between two East Coast lows, low pressure systems that came through. We had torrential rain and flooding leading up to the day before human sign. Then we had this beautiful, beautiful day to do the human sign. And the next day, the next low came through and we had torrential rain again. So it was just like it was meant to be. And maybe Arthur Stace was looking down on us when we, when we did this did this human sign and just created a little window in the weather for us. And we, uh. And then after that, you know, 3000 people turning up on Tathra, who'd ever heard of such a thing? So suddenly we got people coming out of the community to look, let's get this up and running. Let's form a community group called Clean Energy for Eternity. And from that day on, in 2006, that same core group of people still working with us to look at community based solutions to climate change. So it was a really positive way to kick start a community campaign and, and ever since then, we've really focussed on trying to be positive and because you can be positive when it comes to climate, you can be so positive, like jobs, this is all about jobs and that's what we want in our part of the world.

Matthew Nott Oh, we did. Yeah, we got we got on the local news, we got on the national news and we got the got on the front page of the local paper, which is was a thrill. Clean Energy for Eternity three thousand people lined up on Tathra Beach front page of the Bega District News, and that was a great way to get the image out there. In fact, some of our images, I think, went round the world. That Clean Energy for Eternity sign has been used around the world by, by various groups, so we're pretty chuffed. Good way to start a campaign.

Matthew Nott Well, I guess the best response is this one you guys down here filming me talking about scratching at the word Eternity in the in the sand. Um yes. So like all our images, you know, we put them like, try and get them out there on Facebook. Just trying to raise awareness in a positive way about climate change. And the Eternity word is definitely crucial when it comes to climate change. You know, if we if we want to and a future for Eternity, then then we need clean energy and we're doing it. We're doing it as quick as we can with or without political help.

Matthew Nott I think Eternity is really powerful word, and when I think of the word Eternity, I think about my potential grandchildren. You know, I haven't got any grandkids yet, but I think about those unborn grandkids, children who who need the same sort of opportunities as I had. That's that's what I think about when I think about the word eternal, particularly when it comes to climate change, when the science is, is, is the exact opposite. Know we face an existential threat by the end of this century, my grandchildren face an existential threat, and the antidote to that is is the word Eternity. We need to be thinking. We need to be thinking about the end of the century as being a really prosperous, fantastic time where, as our technology improves, and we look

at ways to power our economy through low emissions, we we can have a sustainable climate. It's within our grasp, but we need to be planning for the future. We need vision. We need to listen to the science. And and I guess that's what the word Eternity means to me. We need to be listening to the science when it's talking about a threat and taking action.

Matthew Nott I think Arthur's word Eternity really resonates with with people because he did it in a really, I don't know. It's a really Australian way that he just quietly went about his job, didn't do it, didn't want any thanks for it, wasn't getting paid for it, didn't want any recognition for it. Just quietly went around writing the word Eternity on the on the pavement. And I think just the way he quietly went about his job and creating a word that was, would come and go and disappear mysteriously. I think has, has made the word Eternity a very iconic word in Australia.

Matthew Nott Yeah. I'm not going to change my name, but I quite like, I quite like it. Yeah, the environmental Arthur. Yeah, I'll have to get a little hat.

Matthew Nott I'm Matthew Nott. I'm the founder of the community group, Clean Energy for Eternity.