

Interview With The Director

Question 1: Tell us a bit about yourself...

Damon Gameau: My name is Damon Gameau and I am a film director, I make documentaries. The first documentary I made was called 'That Sugar Film', and then I made a film called '2040', and recently I made a film called 'Regenerating Australia'. I work for a company called Regen Studios, which tries to tell stories that can improve people's wellbeing and the wellbeing of the planet.

Question 2: Why did you create 'Regenerating Australia'? What was happening at the time?

Damon Gameau: It was really a response to the bushfires of 2019 and 2020. We partnered up with WWF Australia to conduct a listening exercise. We asked a diverse range of Australians to think about what kind of changes they would make in this country as we emerged from COVID and those fires. And really, it's also a response to the huge ecological challenges that we face in this country. Climate change is the one we hear a lot about, but we are one of the world leaders in wildlife extinctions, in deforestation, in our use of plastics, and the amount of chemicals we're putting on our food and in the soils.

It's not enough just to live sustainably anymore. We've crossed so many of those ecological boundaries in this country that we need to regenerate to restore and heal those degraded landscapes and ecosystems.

Question 3: Why did you produce the film?

Damon Gameau: I really think we underestimate that storytelling and filmmaking, art, music really does shape culture and influence change. There are really exciting solutions that we can enact in this moment. We sometimes feel very paralyzed and feel quite like there's not much we can do, but the film really tries to wake people up, paint a picture of a better future, get people excited, get them to feel what it would look like to live in that kind of Australia if we made all these changes.

Question 4: Who was the intended audience for the film and how did you want them to respond?

Damon Gameau: First and foremost, it's really important that Australians can see how many other people share their views and feelings about the future, that we actually in our interview process realize a lot of things that unite us are around coming together and taking action on environmental issues. So I think it's quite a broad audience, but in particular, I think the younger generation, especially teenagers, to remind them that there are really exciting careers available in the future to turn things around in this country. Because often that demographic really just hears how bad the world is and all the problems that we're facing, so I wanted them to get excited by different industries that they could investigate.

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Question 5: What inspiration did you draw on when you created the film?

Damon Gameau: We spoke to so many different Australians from really different backgrounds, from farmers to indigenous groups, to teenagers, to tradies and just hearing what kind of future these Australians want was really inspiring. And that really informed the way that this film was put together. It was trying to do a consensus of all those views and then paint a picture using all that feedback.

Question 6: Did you work collaboratively with any of the groups represented in the film? How did this inform what you included in the film?

Damon Gameau: So I think anytime you make a film, people don't understand how deeply collaborative it is at all levels from the creative process, but even the research process. For this film we did a lot of research to make sure that we were getting our facts straight, that we were aligning with the right organisations. And then to try and compress all that and make it feel attractive and appealing was probably one of the most challenging filmmaking experiences I've ever been involved with. It's not my vision of the future, it's absolutely a collaborative vision from a really diverse group of people.

Question 7: What was the biggest challenge about making 'Regenerating Australia'?

Damon Gameau: One of the biggest challenges of this film was to actually make sure that all views were represented so that younger audiences felt like this was their film, conservative farmers could feel like there was something in it for them, and for people in the energy space, or the first nations people of this country. So if there were any outlying views they usually dropped away, but if there was a few people saying something on a given topic, then that stayed in the film, and then it was about trying to find the best solutions based on that topic. So a lot of sharing this film with people before it went out, and getting feedback about what was left out, or whose voices weren't being represented, but that was all part of the collaborative nature of the process.

Question 8: Is there anything else that you wanted to share about 'Regenerating Australia'?

Damon Gameau: A lot of people might not understand how crucial a moment we find ourselves in in this country, whether that's our land clearing or the animals that we've lost, almost 3 billion of them during the fires, but even the amount of plastics we're using, the land we're clearing, how vulnerable we are to climate change, that really regeneration is our only meaningful pathway forward. We really don't have a choice. So we need people to learn these skills, to understand what it means, and to get excited by the opportunities that regeneration can create. Everyone has to get involved and contribute in whatever way they can. And so I really want that to be an exciting adventure for all Australians in the decades ahead.

