



Introduction

> Background	16
> The purpose of the State Sustainability Strategy	17
> Process to develop the draft Strategy	17
> Process to finalise and implement the Strategy	18
> About this document	19

Background

Sustainability is meeting the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement.

Sustainability is a relatively new concept but one that has been widely accepted as a powerful way for the world, nations, states and communities to envision their future and to move forward. The concept challenges us to do things differently, and to look for opportunities to improve our environment, society and economy at the same time, rather than accepting trade-offs between these three important dimensions without question.

The Western Australian Government has embraced sustainability. Premier Gallop said in addressing the Western Australian Leaders Conference, ‘...sustainability—in thought and deed—is the key to ensuring we can improve ourselves and our world. It is an ideal and it does create a challenge but it is the external challenge of making our world better for all and not just a few.’¹ Box 1 provides an overview of the government’s commitment to sustainability from the 2001 Environment Policy.

Achieving sustainability is a long-term agenda that requires rethinking the way we live, use resources, govern and do business. In recognition of these fundamental shifts and the need for a strategic approach, the government established the Sustainability Policy Unit in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in July 2001. In November 2001 the Premier announced that a State Sustainability Strategy would be developed to pursue new forms of development that do not compromise the health of our environment or society. A consultation document was issued in December 2001 and 200 written submissions were received.

BOX 1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT’S ELECTION COMMITMENTS TO SUSTAINABILITY

Establish an ESD² Unit to:

- develop a strategy for sustainability
- monitor and coordinate the environmental, social and economic assessments of government agencies
- undertake ESD assessment of Cabinet submissions, proposed legislation, and agreements
- work with agencies to prepare a code of conduct for policy making and management arrangements.

Introduce annual environmental performance reporting requirements for all government agencies in areas such as energy consumption, waste disposal, vehicle fuel efficiency and recycling.

Encourage all government agencies to buy recycled products where these are available at competitive prices.

Set an example by requiring government departments and agencies to set targets for waste reduction and recycling. These will be audited according to the principles of ESD and included in all Annual Reports.

Source: Environment Policy

¹ Gallop, G (Premier of Western Australia) 2002, *Advancing Western Australia's Leaders Conference*, speech, 25 February, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, viewed 31 July 2002, <http://www.premier.wa.gov.au/Speeches/A01/advancing_leaders_confere_nce_250202.pdf>

² In Australia, the term Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) emerged from the development of the 1992 *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*. Since that time a preference has emerged among business and community leaders worldwide and in Australia for the term ‘sustainability’ as this term is perceived to be more inclusive. The Western Australian Government has since adopted the term ‘sustainability’.

Purpose of the State Sustainability Strategy

The State Sustainability Strategy is the first time that the Western Australian Government has addressed sustainability comprehensively. While there have been elements of sustainability within government policy in the past, the State Sustainability Strategy is the first time that this state has tried to 'meet the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement.'

Process to develop the draft Strategy

The draft State Sustainability Strategy was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders. Developing the draft Strategy involved some innovative activities that are outlined below. All of the information contributed to the thinking behind the draft Strategy, and most written materials are available on the sustainability web site <<http://www.sustainability.dpc.wa.gov.au>> and on the CD-ROM at the back of this document.

Sustainability seminar series

As part of a seminar series entitled *Opportunities for Sustainability In Western Australia*, visiting experts presented 15 seminars on a range of sustainability issues at the Alexander Library Theatre (see Appendix A). The goal was to try and determine the key global approaches to sustainability and what could be applied in Western Australia.

Case studies and background papers

The sustainability agenda is new and complex and the preparation of the draft strategy provided an opportunity to tap the research capacity of universities. A university partnership was established which led to students researching and preparing case studies and background papers. The Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy at Murdoch University provided the most input. The Institute's staff and students have been researching sustainability for over a decade.

Sustainability is best understood by seeing its application by industry, the community and government agencies. Universities were invited to engage undergraduate students in preparing Sustainability Case Studies as part of their course work. The students and several others prepared 44 case studies (see Appendix B). A separate CD-ROM of the Sustainability Case Studies is also available from the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Murdoch University (<<http://www.wistp.murdoch.edu.au>>).

The Sustainability Policy Unit identified a number of priority issues requiring research to determine how they were being addressed within Australia and overseas, and what this could mean for Western Australia (see photo opposite). Postgraduate research students and academics prepared background papers (see Appendix C and CD-ROM) by reviewing the relevant literature and meeting with key experts in Western Australia. In most cases this work will contribute to Honours, Masters and PhD theses.

In addition, community leaders, ethicists and religious leaders were invited to prepare papers on the ethics of sustainability. Written submissions were invited from the end of December 2001 to the end of April 2002 and 200 were received. Submission authors are listed at Appendix D. The submissions and a summary are available on the CD-ROM and on the sustainability web site.



Research students who did background papers for the State Sustainability Strategy prepare to go to a Youth Affairs Conference where they ran a workshop on sustainability in May 2002.

Source: Murdoch University



Source: WA Museum

Sustainability WA exhibit

The WA Museum and the Sustainability Policy Unit jointly mounted an exhibit called *Sustainability WA* as part of the MuseumLink programme. The exhibit described the stories of 18 Western Australians who have contributed to sustainability and travelled to 26 regional centres and throughout the metropolitan area. It is estimated that some 90,000 people had an opportunity to see the exhibit. A free-of-charge postcard was provided so anyone could contribute their ideas and 193 postcards were received. The exhibit is on the WA Museum's web site <<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/museumlink>> and on the CD-ROM.

Process to finalise and implement the Strategy

A final Strategy will be developed over the next six months through extensive consultation and engagement with the community, business and government agencies. The main activities are outlined below and regular updates will be provided through the sustainability web site. Please register your interest to be kept informed of the various consultation activities by contacting the Sustainability Policy Unit (contact details provided below).

Written submissions

The draft State Sustainability Strategy is available for public comment and written submissions on the draft Strategy are welcome until 10 January 2003.

Please send your written submission to:

Sustainability Policy Unit
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
197 St George's Tce
Perth WA 6000

Contact the Sustainability Policy Unit on:

Phone: 08 9222 9438
Fax: 08 9222 9509
Email: sustainability@dpc.wa.gov.au
Web site: <http://www.sustainability.dpc.wa.gov.au>

Public seminars

A new seminar series will be established to generate further engagement and feedback on the draft Strategy. Register your interest in attending by contacting the Sustainability Policy Unit.

Partnership processes

A number of partnership processes have been established to work through proposals and assist with implementing the Strategy. Partnerships with government will be established with local government, peak bodies from civil society, regional organisations, universities and industry.

Final strategy

The final State Sustainability Strategy will be available early in 2003 and will be implemented over the next five to ten years.

The implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy will need to be reviewed over time to ensure it remains effective and to respond to new issues and opportunities that are identified.

> ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The draft State Sustainability Strategy is designed to provide background to the concept of sustainability as well as propose actions for sustainability in Western Australia.

The next part (2) of the Strategy document describes the conceptual basis to sustainability and how the Strategy seeks to give the concept meaning in Western Australia. It outlines the sustainability framework adopted in the draft Strategy, including eleven principles and the Western Australian Government's six goals for sustainability. This part also outlines some of the potential sustainability indicators and emerging techniques in sustainability.

The major part of the strategy outlines the priority areas for action in six parts: Sustainability and governance (3); Contributing to global sustainability (4); Sustainable use of natural resources (5); Sustainability and settlements (6) Sustainability and community (7) and Sustainability and business (8). Within these six sections 42 priority areas for Western Australia are addressed. For each priority area, opportunities to progress sustainability are identified and the proposed government actions over the next five to ten years are described. References, where relevant, to further information, including background papers and case studies are provided at the end of each priority area.

Finally, the the main mechanisms proposed in the draft Strategy are summarised and the process of implementation (9) is outlined.

Appendixes list the seminars, case studies, background papers and written submissions.

A list of all the proposed actions are provided at the end of the document.

Quotations

Quotations from written submissions and relevant documents are placed throughout the document to demonstrate the range of views that people held on sustainability and priority issues.

Unless a separate reference is cited, quotes are taken from written submissions which are available on the CD-ROM.

TEXT BOXES

Text boxes appear throughout the draft Strategy to describe examples of where sustainability is being demonstrated in Western Australia, provide more detail on an initiative proposed in the draft Strategy or explore a particular concept in more detail.

CD-ROM

The Sustainability Policy Unit utilised public submissions and research undertaken by university students and other people to prepare the draft Strategy. All of this information is available on the CD-ROM at the back of this document and is also available from the sustainability web site.

Poster

A poster outlining the Sustainability Framework (see part 2) is provided in the inside back cover.