

Hope for the future

The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy



**A VISION FOR QUALITY OF LIFE
IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



September 2003

A better place to live

Foreword



I have pleasure in presenting Australia's first comprehensive sustainability strategy at the State level. This initiative follows an election commitment and the need identified by the Western Australian Government, along with most governments around the world, to use sustainability as an integrated, whole of government approach to many deep-seated issues.

The State Sustainability Strategy shows how we can meet the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity. It proposes new principles, approaches and actions to help us to achieve a more sustainable future, to help us make a better place to live.

Clearly, sustainability is a concept that resonates. Many people, government agencies and businesses now see this approach as the only way forward. It provides us with the basis of hope for the future and a vision for quality of life in Western Australia.

The transition to a sustainable future is a long-term agenda that requires rethinking the way we live, use resources, govern and do business. The Strategy challenges us to consider new ideas and to be innovative about the opportunities that are presented. The actions contained within the Strategy illustrate how our journey to sustainability will begin. The actions will be implemented over the next five to ten years, though many begin immediately and some will take much longer. Many other actions will emerge as we proceed.

Partnerships are central to the process of sustainability. Government, business and the community will need to find new ways of working together to achieve our common aim. The Strategy reports on the results of a historic partnership developed with local government and provides for several new partnership arrangements.

The time is right for this important Strategy. The global debate has shown that integrating the environment, society and the economy remains an enormous challenge. Individuals, businesses and governments everywhere are searching for new approaches to economic development that contribute to environment and society now without degrading them over the longer term. Western Australia shares this aspiration and I am confident that we can achieve it and benefit from the opportunities that sustainability brings.

I am delighted with the genuine enthusiasm and support expressed by so many people for this initiative thus far. Many people helped in preparing this Strategy. The Strategy will need to evolve and grow with successive governments because we are addressing the future of Western Australia, and most importantly, the future for our children.

Hon. Dr Geoff Gallop MLA
Premier of Western Australia
September 2003

**National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:**

Western Australia.

Hope for the future : the Western
Australian state sustainability strategy.

ISBN 0 7307 0212 X.

1. Environmental policy -
Western Australia. 2.
Sustainable development -
Western Australia. I. Title.

354.09941

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acknowledgement, as permitted under the
Copyright Act.

The writing of the State Sustainability
Strategy was led by Professor Peter
Newman and Michael Rowe, Sustainability
Policy Unit, Department of the Premier
and Cabinet.

For bibliographic purposes, this report
may be cited as:

Government of Western Australia
2003, Hope for the future: The Western
Australian State Sustainability Strategy,
Department of the Premier and
Cabinet, Perth.

Photo credits:

Front cover and title page Ellenbrook,
Western Australia: Artist and
photographer Phillipa O'Brien

Wind turbines: Dessein Graphics

People in field: Midwest Development
Commission

Electronic copies of this publication are
available from the Sustainability web site
<http://www.sustainability.dpc.wa.gov.au>.
Printed copies may be obtained from:

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An electronic copy of this publication,
together with submissions, background
papers and seminar proceedings that
informed its development are included on
the CD-ROM at the back of this document.
A poster showing the sustainability
framework and actions is also included.

Cover and text design by Dessein
Graphics Pty Ltd and Design Design
Graphic Management.

Poster concept design by Eleanor Chaos
and Matthew Barg.

Printed by Quality Press Pty Ltd.

This document is printed with plant-
derived inks on Australian-made
recycled paper.

Executive Summary

Sustainability is meeting the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity. This aspiration enables processes to be developed that provide mutually reinforcing outcomes that can benefit the economy, the community and the environment.

Sustainability is a global process but Western Australia is the first Australian State to undertake a comprehensive assessment of what it means for forty-two areas of government. The State Sustainability Strategy is based on a Sustainability Framework of eleven sustainability principles, six visions for Western Australia and six goals for government.

Actions across government that support the framework are presented and will be implemented over a ten-year period and beyond. A selection of actions is set out below under the Western Australian Government's six goals for sustainability that begin to illustrate how the principles of sustainability can start to be applied across the whole of government.

Ensure that the way we govern is driving the transition to a sustainable future

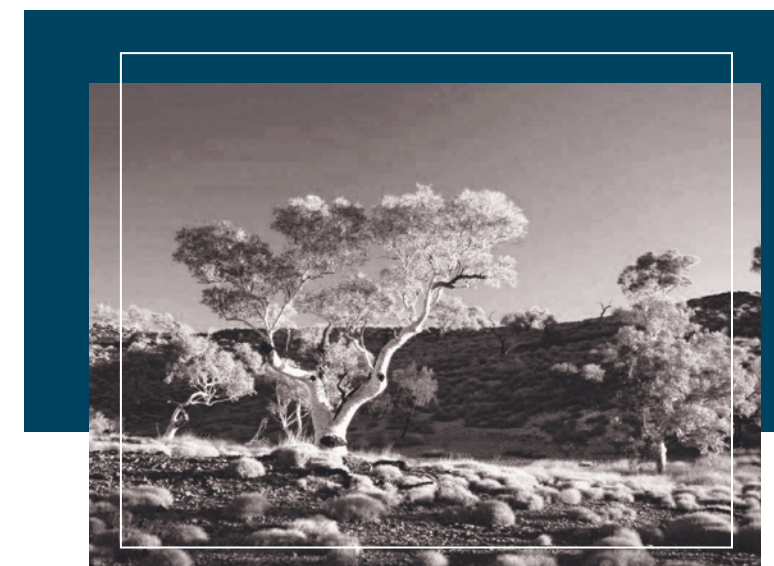
- Develop a **Sustainability Act** that embeds the principles of sustainability in government actions and processes and supports reporting on the outcomes across government through a periodic **State of Sustainability Report**.
- Demonstrate leadership by requiring government agencies to respond to a **Sustainability Code of Practice for Government Agencies** and develop a **Sustainability Action Plan** to address a range of issues including energy use, greenhouse emissions, waste minimisation, community engagement and **sustainability procurement**.
- Initiate and trial **Sustainability Assessment**—an integrated and holistic approach to decision-making to create 'net benefit' outcomes.
- Create a **Sustainability Roundtable** with community and industry expertise in order to facilitate:
 - the further development and implementation of the **State-Local Government Sustainability Partnership Agreement**
 - community and industry **Partnership Projects**
 - **Regional Sustainability Strategies**
 - global aid project involvement
 - **State of Sustainability Reporting** and
 - revising the State Sustainability Strategy (every 2 years).
- Embed sustainability into the planning system through:
 - a **Sustainability Directorate** in the Department for Planning and Infrastructure
 - a **Sustainability Scorecard** approach to development control, and
 - a **Sustainability and Development Assessment Committee** as a Standing Committee of the Western Australian Planning Commission.
- Promote Aboriginal employment targets in major developments, joint management with Aboriginal people of National Parks, an Indigenous Protected Areas program and Indigenous Regional Agreements to support Indigenous sustainability.

Play our part in solving the global challenges of sustainability

- Facilitate the new **Global Centre for Sustainability** (combining expertise from universities, TAFE, the CSIRO, government and industry) to undertake major international partnership projects on the interrelated issues of population, development aid and environmental technology.
- Implement a Western Australian **Greenhouse Strategy** and continue to develop innovative contributions to the global greenhouse issue.
- Develop a **Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Act**, create thirty new National Parks under the policy to protect old-growth forests and five new marine reserves, assess the need for new reserves, and support the linking of major terrestrial reserves with areas of privately owned bush and regeneration, to help meet Australia's international obligations for biodiversity protection.
- Respond to the findings of the Transport Energy Strategy Committee on short, medium and long-term transport goals for the transition from oil vulnerability, to gas, to the hydrogen economy.

Value and protect our environment and ensure the sustainable management and use of natural resources

- Develop a new vision for the **Ningaloo Coast** including fast tracking World Heritage nomination for Cape Range – Ningaloo Coast and gazette the extensions to the Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park.
- Strengthen the *Nuclear Waste Facility (Prohibition) Act 1999* so that it prohibits the transportation or storage of any **nuclear waste** in Western Australia.
- Use **Statements of Planning Policy** and other mechanisms to coordinate the actions of local governments, regional councils and State natural resource management agencies on priority natural resource issues, for example regional drainage, biodiversity corridors, local community services and coastal planning.
- Build **community values** into regulatory approaches to natural resources management.



Snappy gums, Karijini National Park.

Source: Cliff Winfield/ Department of Conservation and Land Management

Plan and provide settlements that reduce the ecological footprint and enhance our quality of life

- Implement the **State Water Strategy** and continue to develop long-term solutions for water conservation and water supply including more community scale re-use applications.
- Emphasise the **revitalisation of suburbs** and, as part of Greater Perth, establish growth management to control urban sprawl.
- Overcome car dependence through development that builds on the doubling of the rail system, revamp the **Perth Bike Plan** and introduce a **SmartRider** ticketing system for public transport with extra incentives, security and speed of operation.
- Develop a **Strategic Framework for Waste Management**, including detailed plans for each waste stream (including hazardous waste), towards **zero waste by 2020**.
- Demonstrate the **Sustainability Scorecard** approach to development control to encourage thermal efficiency, solar orientation, accessible design, affordable housing and other sustainable building practices in new and renovated homes.

Support communities to fully participate in achieving a sustainable future

- Involve the community in developing 'place management' approaches through an **integrated community services framework** to help prioritise and co-locate services.
- Create an **Education for Sustainability Competition** based on student projects and school plans demonstrating sustainability.
- Hold an annual sustainability ethics seminar '**Many Cultures – One Earth**' and an annual **Sustainable Living Festival**.
- Promote Aboriginal naming of regions, towns, suburbs and landscape features, to assist in the development of 'sense of place' in Western Australia.
- Use *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide* and *Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success* to promote effective public consultation and active citizenship.
- Strengthen communities in their 'sense of place' through a neighbourhood renewal initiative, an Early Intervention Strategy, projects in sport, recreation, culture and the arts, and Regional Sustainability Strategies.

Assist business to benefit from and contribute to sustainability

- Establish training schemes to provide capacity in new areas of professional activity for sustainability through initiatives such as a TAFE centre of specialisation in **applied sustainability**.
- Implement strategies that support the use of **local employment in mining ventures**.
- Review taxation, subsidies and financial incentives to promote sustainability and support **Sustainability Investment Tours**.
- Create **industry sustainability covenants** that recognise and help to market sustainability innovation and leadership, particularly in regions as part of Regional Sustainability Strategies.
- Develop through **industry partnerships** new approaches to sustainable building, eco-efficiency (the factor 4 agenda), sustainability assessment, mining and petroleum production sustainability, corporate social responsibility and the new sustainability research and development agenda.
- Continue to document and celebrate the best examples of **industry innovation** in sustainability.



Source: Midwest Development Commission

Acknowledgements

The Sustainability Policy Unit would like to thank the many, many people from across government, industry and the community who contributed to the thinking and ideas behind the State Sustainability Strategy. In particular, the Sustainability Policy Unit would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of the Policy Division of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Matthew Barg and Sylvie Hebert, Canadian Interns with the Sustainability Policy Unit, have provided invaluable assistance in preparing the final Strategy.

The following students, academics and others also contributed time and energy to researching and preparing background papers and sustainability case studies and this is acknowledged with thanks. These materials have provided excellent insights into sustainability innovation across Australia and around the world and have been a source of inspiration.

Kim Holland, Lucy Carew-Reid, Erik Stanton-Hicks, Te-Anau Merito, Simone Ruane, Ray Hart, Helen McAulay, Luke Stange, Jenny Marquis, Letisha Newman, Kerrie-Anne Garlick, Toni Lewis, Shamin Samani, Cathy Parsons, Danielle Rebbettes, Mieke Bourne, David Beyer, Grant Alderson, Suzanne Turner, Cesira Leigh, Xavier Menage, Petra Zele, Sam George, Paul Ryan, Kellie Maher, Rebecca Armstrong, Glen Head, Jessica Prince, Jade Carlton, Sharon Curciarello, Nicole Miles, Dr Robert Passey, Damian Combes, Ben Marshall, Lisa Garrity, Alix Rhodes, Steve Kinnane, Dr Gaomai Trench, Sarah Bell, Susie Waller, Coral Pepper, Rachel Armstrong, Piers Verstegan, Dr Sandra Wooltorton, Lauren Aitken, Bruce Robinson, Adam Hawkes, Dr Lance Chambers, Kerry Stolls, Dr David Bennett, Kathryn Buselich, Clair Hogg.

Ethics and Sustainability papers were received from Veronica Brady, Steve Algie (Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission), Christabel Chamarette, Michael Booth, Aidan Davidson, Keith McDonald (Bahai), Bhuddist Society, Islamic Council, John Olley (Baptist Church), George Kailis, the Uniting Church and Nancy Victorin-Vangerud.

Bruce Larson, Amber Hadley, Elyse Casserly and John Colwill helped with box stories and Christy Newman with copy editing.

Kathryn Buselich and Clair Hogg compiled and analysed the first public submissions while Michelle McManus, Gilda Davies, Sylvie Hébert, Brendon Tapley, Jenni Boyle and Matthew Barg processed the second round of submissions. Rebecca Armstrong and Simone Ruane compiled and edited the case studies. The assistance and enthusiasm of all these people is gratefully acknowledged.

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Background

Sustainability is meeting the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

This aspiration enables processes to be developed that provide mutually reinforcing and beneficial outcomes for the economy, the community and the environment.

Sustainability is a relatively new concept but one that has been widely accepted as a powerful way for the world, nations, states, businesses 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 them 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.

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, and
- prepare and monitor quality of life indicators.

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

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. The draft State Sustainability Strategy was released for comment in September 2002 and 171 submissions were received.

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_conference_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

In the State Sustainability Strategy, the Western Australian Government has addressed sustainability comprehensively for the first time. While there have been elements of sustainability within government policy in the past, the Strategy is the first attempt in this State to meet the needs of current and future generations through integrating environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity.

The purpose of the State Sustainability Strategy is to illustrate how the State government will respond to the sustainability agenda by adopting the sustainability framework and highlighting actions across government that give meaning to the framework. By focusing the Strategy on agency activity, the State government is demonstrating its important leadership role in supporting the transition to a sustainable future.

> HOW COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY SHOULD APPROACH THE STRATEGY

The core of the State Sustainability Strategy is the sustainability framework that is outlined at the front of the document. This framework describes what sustainability means. These seventeen pages about the concept and framework are relevant to all Western Australians. The rest of the document describes what government agencies will do to give substance to the framework. The majority of the document is therefore government-oriented, though various sections and actions are relevant to individuals, community and industry.

There is already significant individual, community, local government and industry innovation occurring that is consistent with the sustainability framework. The main task for the community and industry with regard to the State Sustainability Strategy is to examine the seventeen-page section that defines sustainability and its principles and see what this means for them. All stakeholders are encouraged to further engage with the sustainability framework, to undertake their own activities in support of sustainability, and to be involved with the implementation and ongoing development of the Strategy.

The government supports the development of consultative partnership approaches with local government, industry and non-government organisations, particularly for those actions where the participation of these stakeholders is essential for the actions to be effective. The Strategy therefore establishes mechanisms to support the active participation of stakeholders in developing and progressing partnership initiatives for sustainability.

Over time, many other actions and partnerships will emerge that create further opportunities to address sustainability. Therefore, the State Sustainability Strategy must be viewed as a work in progress and as part of the journey to sustainability, not the destination.

> PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE STRATEGY

The State Sustainability Strategy was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders. Developing the Strategy involved some innovative activities that are outlined below. All of the information contributed to the thinking behind the 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 seminars and workshops

As part of a seminar series entitled Opportunities for Sustainability in Western Australia, visiting experts presented fifteen seminars on a range of sustainability issues at the Alexander Library Theatre, leading up to the writing of the draft strategy. The goal was to try and determine the key global approaches to sustainability and what could be applied in Western Australia. Following the release of the draft State Sustainability Strategy, six workshops / seminars were held in Perth to present the Strategy and receive feedback on the major sections. A regional seminar series was also undertaken and twenty-two seminars were held in regional areas. The Sustainability Policy Unit has been invited to speak on the draft Strategy at over 150 events including conferences and seminars since its release.

Case studies and background papers

The sustainability agenda is new and complex and the preparation of the Strategy provided an opportunity to utilise 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 forty-four case studies. 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 that required research to understand how they were being addressed within Australia and overseas, and what this could mean for Western Australia. Postgraduate research students and academics prepared background papers (see 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 and peer review

Written submissions on the discussion paper were invited from the end of December 2001 to the end of April 2002. Written submissions on the draft Strategy were invited from September 2002 to February 2003. One hundred and seventy-one submissions were made on the draft State Sustainability Strategy. A group of sustainability experts were also sent the draft State Sustainability Strategy for their 'peer review' comments.

Government agencies have provided detailed submissions on how the State Sustainability Strategy can be implemented and have integrated their programs and activities into the Strategy. All submissions in response to the discussion paper and the draft State Sustainability Strategy, including the peer review comments, are available on the CD-ROM and on the sustainability web site. A response from the Sustainability Policy Unit to the submissions on the draft Strategy is also available in tabular form based on a summary of each point made in each submission. Table 1 below summarises the comments from submissions made on each section of the draft Strategy.

Table 1 Numerical breakdown of responses to draft strategy sections

| Section from draft strategy | No. of responses |
|---|------------------|
| Foreword | 78 |
| 1. Introduction | Total=27 |
| - Background | 16 |
| - Process to develop the draft Strategy | 3 |
| - Process to finalise and implement the SSS | 8 |
| 2. Conceptual basis | Total=58 |
| - Evolution of sustainability | 2 |
| - What sustainability means | 17 |
| - Character of the Strategy | 3 |
| - A sustainability framework | 28 |
| - Indicators for sustainability | 8 |
| 3. Sustainability and governance | Total=434 |
| - Introduction | 7 |
| - Sustainability assessment | 93 |
| - Institutional change | 35 |
| - Embracing sustainability in government agencies | 39 |
| - Partnerships for action | 49 |
| - Planning for sustainability | 64 |
| - Sustainability in the regions | 47 |
| - Indigenous communities and sustainability | 50 |
| - Research and development for sustainability | 26 |
| - Sustainability information online | 16 |
| - Recognising sustainability excellence | 8 |
| 4. Contributing to global sustainability | Total=189 |
| - Introduction | 5 |
| - Population, development aid and environmental technology | 32 |
| - Maintaining our biodiversity | 58 |
| - Responding to greenhouse and climate change | 68 |
| - Oil vulnerability, the gas transition and the hydrogen economy | 26 |
| 5. Sustainable use of natural resources | Total=235 |
| - Introduction | 22 |
| - Sustainable agriculture | 57 |
| - Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture | 25 |
| - Sustainable forestry and plantations | 10 |
| - Sustainable mining and petroleum production | 31 |
| - Sustainable tourism | 21 |
| - Protecting aquatic systems | 32 |
| - Sustainable coastal and marine environments | 21 |
| - Sustainable rangelands management | 16 |
| 6. Sustainability and settlements | Total=502 |
| - Introduction | 12 |
| - Managing urban and regional growth | 82 |
| - Revitalising declining centres and suburbs | 34 |
| - Integrating land use and balanced transport | 72 |
| - Managing freight and regional transport | 20 |
| - Preserving air quality | 19 |
| - Reducing and managing waste | 84 |
| - Our water future | 47 |
| - Sustainable energy | 67 |
| - Preserving cultural heritage and landscapes and creating 'sense of place' | 31 |
| - Building sustainably | 34 |
| 7. Sustainability and community | Total=127 |
| - Introduction | 11 |
| - Community services and development | 20 |
| - Housing and sustainability | 22 |
| - Sustaining healthy communities | 18 |
| - Education and community awareness for sustainability | 28 |
| - Culture and the arts | 20 |
| - Multiculturalism | 8 |
| 8. Sustainability and business | Total=104 |
| - Introduction | 12 |
| - Training and facilitation for sustainability | 31 |
| - Financial reform and economic instruments | 26 |
| - Eco-efficiency and industrial ecology | 21 |
| - Industry sustainability covenants | 14 |
| 9. Implementation | Total=82 |



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 program. The exhibit described the stories of 18 Western Australians who have contributed to sustainability and traveled 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://203.30.234.169/wam/exhibitions/online/sustainability/index.html>> and on the CD-ROM.

WA Collaboration

The WA Collaboration, a partnership of peak civil society groups including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Council of Churches of WA, Ethnic Communities Council of WA, Environmental Alliance, Unions WA, WA Council of Social Services and the WA Sustainable Industry Group was funded by Lotterywest to work with non-government organisations on the sustainability agenda and feed into the development of the State Sustainability Strategy. The WA Collaboration has developed a Community Sustainability Agenda (www.wacollaboration.org.au) after conducting regional workshops and a 'Sustainability Summit'.

Partnership processes

A number of partnership processes have been established to work through proposals and assist with developing the Strategy. The most significant was the State-Local Government Sustainability Roundtable, which explored opportunities for the State and local governments to work together to progress sustainability. This process was facilitated through seven workshops. A partnership approach with local government is integral to the implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy.

A university partnerships process was established to help provide background material for the project (see photo below).



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

A further partnership was established with universities, CSIRO and TAFE called the Global Centre for Sustainability. This Global Centre for Sustainability has contributed to the development of a methodology for how Regional Sustainability Strategies can be developed.

Working Groups were also established on a partnership basis and in particular the Working Group on Sustainability Assessment provided assistance with how to proceed on this. A report summarising the output from the working group is available on the sustainability web site.

> ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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

The various major parts of the document are shown in the 'roadmap' diagram below.

The conceptual basis and sustainability framework

The next part of the document describes the concept of sustainability and how the Strategy gives this meaning in a Western Australian context through the sustainability framework. The sustainability framework consists of eleven principles, six visions for Western Australia and six government goals for sustainability action.

This part is in a different colour to demonstrate that the sustainability framework is the basis and core of the whole Strategy. These seventeen pages effectively outline what sustainability means. The remainder of the document describes what government agencies will do to give substance to the framework in their areas of responsibility.

All stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the sustainability framework to understand what it could mean for them. There is already significant individual, community, local government and industry innovation that is consistent with the framework and examples are summarised in boxes throughout the Strategy and through Sustainability Case Studies on the sustainability web site.

Priority areas

The majority of the Strategy document outlines the forty-two priority areas for government action in six sections:

1. Sustainability and governance
2. Contributing to global sustainability
3. Sustainable natural resource management
4. Sustainability and settlements
5. Sustainability and community, and
6. Sustainability and business.

For each priority area opportunities to progress sustainability are identified and illustrative government actions, to be implemented over the next five to ten years, are described. Where relevant, references to further information, including background papers and case studies, are provided at the end of each priority area.

Implementation and action plan

The final section summarises the main mechanisms proposed in the Strategy and outlines the process of implementation. A list of all the actions and the responsible agencies is also provided: this is the Action Plan for the State Sustainability Strategy. The Action Plan is a statement of intent from government agencies indicating how they will contribute to addressing sustainability. However, many other actions will emerge over time as government, industry and the community find new ways to extend this agenda.

CD-ROM

The Sustainability Policy Unit utilised public submissions and research undertaken by university students, academics and government agencies to prepare the Strategy. All of this information is available on the CD-ROM enclosed at the back of this document and from the sustainability web site.

Poster

A poster outlining the Sustainability Framework and a summary of the key Sustainability Actions, is inserted in the inside back cover of this document.

ROADMAP TO STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY DOCUMENT

