

As the driving force behind all development (destruction) is burgeoning population growth the word sustainability, the most misused and abused, as well as misleading word, in the English language, should not be used in regards to human activity, as everything we do has an adverse impact on our Eco-systems, apart from rehabilitating degraded environments that should never have been degraded or destroyed in the first place.

1. The Sustainability Policy Unit established in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet should be called the “Population Stabilisation Policy Unit”, for unless WA stabilises, and even reduces, human population growth, the vicious circle of ecologically unsustainable development continues, as we have an ecologically unsustainable Population and we’ll all waste precious time and money trying to control the uncontrollable.
2. I suggest that the Premier and all Staff read the “1998 State of the Environment Report,” produced at considerable expense and effort by the previous Coalition Government under Premier Richard Court, a comprehensive and frightening report highlighting the enormous loss of biodiversity in Western Australia, with massive areas affected by salinity and land degradation, worsening air, land and water pollution and increasing water shortages caused by the pressures of a growing population.

The CSIRO in an article in the West Australian 14 march 2002 “Big dry spell here to stay” has stated that in the last 25 years there had been only one winter of above average flow into dams, compared with 13 above-average winters from 1950-1975 here in WA. Yet despite these worrying predictions it is business as usual and no attempts are made on a State or Federal level to stabilise our numbers through an end to immigration and Zero Population growth, and our very own Geoff Gallop in a media statement of 23 July 2001 said that “Perth will need better planning to cope with a predicted population of more than two million over the next three decades!”

We have now a population of 1.3 million, a further 700,000 people will spell disaster for our remaining old growth and re-growth Forests, native bushland and wetlands, and wilderness areas as well as coastal areas, all reeling under the pressure from too many HOMO SAPIENS, degrading and destroying Flora and Fauna habitat. Even the Yarragadee aquifer is suffering from the stresses of urban development and as it is hydro-geologically connected to the Gnangara ground water mounds and the Leederville aquifer that recharge it, the impact in terms of distribution of groundwater de-pressuring and water table drop will be detrimental to the supply of clean drinking water and waterbird habitat.

The first Australians lived here for at least 50,000 years, they had no water problems, no significant environmental problems and apart from fire management practices, no air, soil and water pollution, with only 3 mega-fauna extinctions, all because of a low consumption rate and a population of between 300,000 and 1.2 million.

Unfortunately our ecological footprint is 4.4 ha of productive land each to sustain our standard of living so it is grossly irresponsible both on environmental and social grounds to increase the human Population, Zero Population growth is the responsible, environmentally friendly answer.

Astrid Herlihy

This submission also included the following attachments:

- Attachment A: Naïve Bush Justice – commentary from Mike Bamford for The Wild Side
- Attachment B: Let's have a population policy, but remember.... – brochure produced by the Sustainable Population Australia.

Contact the Sustainability Policy Unit of the Department of Premier and Cabinet to obtain copies.