

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance

Linking Change Makers

Submission

From the

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance,
Western Australia

To the

"Focus on the Future: Opportunities for
Sustainability in Western Australia"

A consultation paper for the State Sustainability Strategy
for Western Australia

30 April, 2002

The WA Chapter of ACCA aims to create a future in which all Australian organisations will seek to sustain their success in ways that demonstrate respect for ethical values. people, communities and the natural environment.

To register as a member of this vibrant and innovative community and to help build business, government and community leadership best practise in corporate citizenship visit www.accalliance.asn.au

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ACCA

The ACCA is a national body committed to creating a future in which all Australian organisations will seek to sustain their success in ways that demonstrate respect for ethical values. people, communities and the natural environment.

Begun in 2000, it has chapters in Victoria, Western Australia and New South Wales and is an incorporated not-for-profit organisation.

The ACCA has its own web-site www.accalliance.asn.au. The WA chapter of the Alliance meets on the first Thursday of each month and seeks to provide guest speakers on relevant topics to corporate citizenship, followed by networking opportunities.

ACCA sees the strategic need for business to take corporate citizenship seriously in order for those businesses to be successful in the future, and to accept its share of responsibility in building a vibrant economy sustained by a healthy environment and robust communities.

Our members range from senior managers to young leaders from business, government, public sector and NGO's. We are all passionate about effecting change within Australian Corporations and aim to influence through building knowledge around corporate citizenship, inspiring colleagues and engaging others in leading and effecting change.

ACCA is linking these change makers to build a community of aspiration and collaborative learning, exchange ideas, share strategies and support each other.

With a strong business focus, our monthly forums, guest speakers and networking opportunities promote lively debate, generate ideas, inspire action and provide opportunities to share information and build relationships with like-minded people.

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance

Linking Change Makers

Key Questions

Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?

The ACCA believes that sustainability is a worthwhile pursuit. Sustainability is about ensuring that businesses have a future. Sustainability is about ensuring that that future is one shared with communities within an environment that is not lessened by business activity, rather enhanced for all.

Measure: Number of businesses headquartered in WA producing triple bottom line reports or can provide real evidence of a long term strategy towards sustainability.

What benefits could flow if sustainability was taken more seriously?

There is a realisation among business more deeply involved with sustainability that real costs savings are on offer. One of the major aspects of sustainability is overcoming waste. If business were to only concentrate on this one aspect, they could expect to reduce costs, be more competitive and enhance profits.

Measure: The ratio of waste generated to inputs to production.

Another benefit to flow would be an increased level of trust from stakeholders to those companies engaged with sustainability. This would allow for a more comprehensive level of risk management for longer-term planning.

Measure: The number of companies undertaking full social impact assessments as part of their business planning process.

In your experience, what opportunities exist to pursue sustainability?

Government should establish a series of stepped government charges and fees on business, local governments and state government authorities (over time), reflecting their ongoing commitment to sustainability and enable company's to reflect their sustainable efforts in cost terms.

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance

Linking Change Makers

A company could expect to incur lower government charges where they can specifically demonstrate improved environmental, social and economic performance..... the more engaged with sustainability, conversely, a company could expect to incur higher charges if not engaged with sustainability.

Measure: Ratio of non-sustainable to sustainable government fees collected.

What is the role of government, business, and the community in facilitating change to be more sustainable?

Government should be giving leadership. It should be constantly raising the profile of sustainability, announcing a vision for the future. All government departments should be taking the lead to improve their economic, social and environmental performance in a demonstrable manner ie Government should be actually "walking the talk" in sustainable practices, sooner rather than later.

Business should continue its current role in leading the charge to sustainable practices. A truly sustainable economy means companies engaging in best practices delivering high profits would be the norm. Profitability among companies should not be looked on as a negative rather it should be encouraged.

At the same time, business should not in any way impact negatively on the social & environmental health of all levels of the community. This concept can be broadened - according to the will of the business sector - to one where business not only creates no social or environmental negativity due to its activities, but also where the business community actively contribute towards the social and environmental good of the immediate and broader community. Business needs to embrace the idea of transparency and community accountability more fully.

Sustainable practices will not be forthcoming from all community sectors if the communities are not educated in, fully understanding of, and engaged in sustainability. There has to be real leadership from the Government - and from business - to and through the media to raise the expectations of the community as a whole and

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance

Linking Change Makers

educate the community in practical ways that they can make the difference in their own sectors.

What best-practice examples exist, if any, to demonstrate how sustainability is being progressed?

Examples would include:

- 1) The rock lobster industry.
- 2) Mining rehabilitation.
- 3) Land care rehabilitation.

What Research and development is needed to ensure sustainability outcomes can be achieved?

We as a State should not attempt to finance research and development in every aspect of human endeavour – that would make limited resources unsustainable. There are areas that should be concentrated on, for these can then be exemplified as best practice examples and shared globally.

- 1) Land care programs: - the reclamation of salt affected land back to long-term productive or natural states.
- 2) Fishing industry: - the rock lobster industry is global best practice in many ways, its management techniques should be translated to other fisheries, including aquaculture.
- 3) Mining practices: - many worlds best practice achievements are made in this area, and should be further encouraged.

To be considered for R & D assistance, a project should be demonstrably at or close to best practice, or display the potential to achieve global best practice to attract funds. Project mapping should be encouraged in areas such as medical, insurance, tourism and other ventures.

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In a more general sense, what else should Western Australia be doing to contribute nationally, regionally and globally to progress sustainability?

Different Perspectives

Business and Industry Groups

Innovations: - The establishment of the ACCA demonstrates that business is aware of the need to address sustainability, but it is entering new ground and needs to learn how best to contribute, and benefit from it.

There is an opportunity for business to move from a paradigm of compliance with community and environmental standards to one in which business is valued for its contribution to improving the community. Not only should this occur through traditional functions of making profits and creating jobs, but also in the way in which it manages to ensure that overall impacts provide positive community outcomes.

For stakeholders (and shareholders) to judge this value, business will need to be aware of the issues and have access to information on sustainability.

There is a need for organisations such as the ACCA to assist business in moving to this new paradigm.

Business can work with Government to help share examples of sustainable economic development that achieves better social and environmental outcomes. Highlighting sustainable achievements by companies in the press may be one option. Using pro-active

Australian Corporate Citizenship Alliance

Linking Change Makers

communication tools (internet, direct advertising, sponsorships, etc) to highlight success – and failures – may be another.

Kick-back would be expected from some community groups, but the vast majority of stakeholders need reassurance that sustainable principles means delivery of better environmental, social and economic conditions for all and not a reduction in aspirations.

Examples of Questions on Sustainability Issues!

The ACCA as a body that works in facilitating the sharing of knowledge and best practice, would act to bring these and similar issues before its membership. Its members would be able to better contribute to this debate through their own companies from a more rounded and informed platform.