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Hello Professor Newman

I congratulate the Western Australian Government for having the foresight to develop a State Sustainability Strategy. I am a visitor from South Australia, and saw your public display at the Norseman Post Office. This is my sixth visit to Western Australia and as both of my sons are now based in Perth it is likely that I will make many more visits and have a genuine interest in a more sustainable state.

I am a City Councillor with the Whyalla City Council. I have chaired the development of the Local Agenda 21 Plan for Whyalla and was responsible for our Council being the first in the state to have a Sustainable Development plan to regulate building activity. It is really heartening to see that your government has been willing to tackle the issue on a whole of state level, rather than leaving it to local councils.

Over the years that I have been visiting Western Australia, I have been pleased to see a change in attitude toward environmental protection. I have high level of involvement in volunteering in National Parks and I am impressed by the work being done by CALM in managing the environment. I am not saying that their work is perfect, but there is clear evidence of a significant commitment to the environment.

As a member of the Eastern Eyre Animal and Plant Control board, I am impressed by your efforts in both weed and feral animal control. Western Australia's baiting programs dwarf anything that is being done in South Australia. . Your farming community is also making better progress in trying to undo past mistakes, than farmers in our state. It is also pleasing to see the significant corporate sponsorship of your Greening programs. Western Australia is doing well in these areas.

There are however areas that I can see that Western Australia is not doing well. These are urban sprawl, energy management and water supply

The rapid growth of urban areas along the west coast is most concerning. I can see a time in the not too distant future when Western Australia will have a continuous coastal city that extends from Lancelin to Dunsborough. There is an urgent need to set aside

significant green belts of both native vegetation and rural land which cannot be subdivided for residential purposes. Urban sprawl is removing vegetation associations and forcing rural activity further from Perth. The cost of providing services over such a widely dispersed urban area must be huge. The sprawl also encourages a high level of car use, which in the long run will be difficult to sustain. The paving over of large areas, must also have implications for your sub-surface water supplies.

The immediate coastal zone also needs a higher level of protection to prevent the privatisation of the coast. I understand the desire of Real Estate developers to have blocks that front the beach. Once built on, public access to the beach is limited. This restriction on access goes on into the future; limiting what people can do for years to come. In my opinion, the right of the public to have easy access to beaches is a higher priority than private profit.

Energy

Energy is fundamental – no energy - no society. We have a bank account of energy that comes to us from the distant past – If we spend it as quickly as possible then there will be little of value left for our children.

I have been amazed by the almost complete lack of environmental consciousness shown by those responsible for the design, approval and construction of houses. I have taken the opportunity to walk around a number developments and I see houses being built with black Colorbond or black tiled roofs, houses with no sun protection for the windows etc etc. These buildings violate the most basic of design rules.

A badly designed house is a long-term energy issue, as it will continue to use excessive amounts of energy for many years after its original occupants move on. As a matter of urgency Western Australia needs to mandate at least Five Star energy efficiency for all new construction and for extensions over a particular value. The beauty of setting an energy standard is that the builder is not constrained to a particular method of construction. They can choose any one of many different paths to reach the goal. In this way, people can have their needs for individuality catered for, without doing a lot of damage to the environment. In South Australia, we have recently introduced 3.5 Star energy rating as the minimum standard, this is now seen by both the Master Builder's Association and by Planning SA as being too low a standard.

The biggest nuclear reactor in the solar system is the sun. It produces more than enough energy to meet the needs of humanity and will do so for at least another 2 billion years. It does this 365 days a year and requires no inputs from humanity and creates NO pollution on earth. We should be putting a major effort into harnessing the power of this reactor. We can do this either directly through collecting solar energy or indirectly through harnessing the wind as has been done at Esperance and Albany. An added benefit of this approach is that it reduces the amount of Greenhouse Gases that we will have to deal with.

I am pleased to see that Western Australia has recognised the need for a transition to a Hydrogen economy. I encourage you to pursue this goal with considerable vigour. You cannot power a semi-trailer or a factory by using solar cells. There is need for fuel that is portable and concentrated – hydrogen is such a fuel.

I have no doubt that there will be considerable resistance to such an idea, as Western Australia has such large natural gas reserves. These reserves are finite. The message to Western Australians needs to be that renewable energy will create new jobs and will lower long-term costs for them.

Water

We live on a planet called Earth, but it really is planet Water. Life as we know it is not possible without water. Over recent years problems with the availability of reliable water supplies, quality of water and cost of water have become more apparent. But, I see little evidence of tackling the problem, beyond restricting garden watering.

What are you going to do about towns that dispose of sewage via septic systems that discharge to ground above the water table that supplies the local community? Surely there must come a time when the effluent reaches that water and pollutes it. Western Australia has some of the most beautiful plants in the world and yet I see little evidence of their use in local gardens. These plants are adapted to your climate and need less water than exotics.

Why do so few of the motels that I have stayed in have low flow showers? This is a simple method of conserving water every day. I notice that the city of New York gives low flow shower-heads to its residents as they have found that this is cost effective. They have also found that it was more cost effective to keep a significant area of the Hudson catchment in forest, rather than building a large treatment plant to clean up water.

We have to find ways of de-salinating the sea at a reasonable cost. Using direct solar energy to do so is the most efficient way of doing this. In Whyalla, we are working on a project to use parabolic dishes to desalinate 9 mega-litres of water per day and provide 5 mega watts of power at the same time. If we were to use the reverse osmosis process, we would first have to generate the power and then force the water through a membrane. There are energy losses at each stage of this process and we would use up all of the power. For this reason, society should only use reverse osmosis as a method where absolutely necessary.

The consultation paper asks a number of key questions.

Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?

The answer to this is emphatically YES!!! How will society survive if we do not address this issue??

What benefits would flow from a more serious approach to sustainability?

I see no conflict between sustainability and lower costs for the individual. My house is correctly orientated, has a white roof, insulated walls and the water is heated by a solar

system. The result of this is that we get limited heat uptake in the day and we can open it up to get cooling breezes in the evening. We need very limited amounts of air-conditioning to maintain a comfortable environment in summer. The result of all of this is lower electricity costs. My garden has a significant number of native plants in it and all runoff from the roof is channelled into either my rainwater tank or into a sub-surface drainage system. As a result, we save on water costs as well.

What opportunities exist to pursue sustainability?

I can see significant possibilities and profits in a more active pursuit of sustainability. I believe that there are many jobs that would flow from making more energy efficient or water efficient equipment. Generating power from the wind or from the sun also means new jobs. Industry will not head in this direction unless there is a market pull to guide them. For this reason I would suggest that you look at the work of Paul Hawken and Amory Lovins to see how their ideas might best be applied to Western Australia

What is the role of government, business and the community in facilitating change?

The role of government is two-fold: to lead by example
to set the appropriate legislative framework.

Throughout my life I have found that it is better to show people that a lower impact lifestyle is both comfortable and cheaper. Governments can do the same.

I accept that not all people or businesses will respond to positive examples. For this reason there needs to be legislation that encourages better use of resources and ultimately which punishes those who are profligate. For example setting a standard for energy use per square metre of commercial office space gives the building owner a target to work toward.

I believe that the media have an important role to play in promoting sustainability. At the moment much of what we see and hear is focussed on maximising consumption. If we look at advertising during wartime, we see an emphasis on less consumption. It is possible for the media to sing a different tune. The question is how do we teach them this new tune?

The community has the power of individual actions, which when taken in total are very significant. HOWEVER until Government, business and the media lead the way and provide means for people to live more sustainably; I believe that individual action will be limited to a few committed people.

Best practice examples

In this area, I find it difficult to comment on your situation. The promotion of best practice is a good way to lead businesses and individuals toward sustainability.

What research and development is needed?

The development of low pollution energy sources is critical. If WA is going to change to a hydrogen economy, then there will need to be much more work done on the direct

conversion of solar energy, fuels cells and the transportation of hydrogen. There is a need for more work to be done on the development of bio-fuels as a transitional fuel. The oil mallee project is an excellent example of a multi-value approach to energy production.

Finding low cost and efficient methods of de-salinating seawater is also important. I would pursue this before building a pipeline from the Ord scheme to the south-west.

Much of the technology for more efficient appliances and industrial processes is already available, they will be taken up when/if costs drive businesses and individuals in that direction.

What can Western Australia do?

- Continue to be active in protecting your natural environment. WA has significant biological treasures that it should protect for all humanity.
- Show people that there is money to be made from protecting the environment. Eg the Oil Mallee project.
- Legislate for energy efficiency and water efficiency.
- Actively encourage householders, Councils, businesses and industry to conserve energy and water.
- Assist farmers to find less damaging ways of producing the food that we need.
- Legislate for Green Belts to limit development to particular localities, rather than having continuing sprawl.
- Continue to develop and promote the public transport system. The Mitchell Freeway line is a good example of what can be done to make rail a viable transport alternative.
- Promote the good things that you are doing and plan to do.

I congratulate you on your Sustainability initiative and would be most interested to get a copy of the Draft Sustainability Plan.

Yours faithfully

Clint Garrett
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