

Professor Peter Newman,  
Director, Sustainability Policy Unit  
Policy Office  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
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PERTH WA 6000

Dear Peter,

## **STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY**

The Conservation Commission offers the following comments on the discussion paper and the sustainability concept generally.

The Conservation Commission is very supportive of the concept of sustainability and the State Government's attempts to promote it. It is clearly one of the major drivers of the Commission. Our statutory functions include "advising the Minister on policy development for the preservation of biodiversity". For biodiversity to be enjoyed by future generations, we must ensure that the State's biodiversity is managed according to the principles of sustainability. One way of achieving this is through the development of management plans for all lands vested with the Commission. These include lands under the proposed Forest Management Plan, regional parks, wheatbelt areas and pastoral lands. Obviously, one of the Commission's immediate tasks is to ensure a sustainable timber industry is achieved within the State's forests. In particular, the Commission is seeking to advise the Minister for Environment and Heritage on the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management.

Biodiversity within this State has been in a steady decline since European settlement. As Western Australia is one of the top biodiversity hotspots in the world, the State Government will need to work closely with all, to ensure the reversal of this decline. This can only be achieved by a whole of government approach, which also includes all interested parties from outside of Government. Currently much work is being done, but often it is not in a coordinated, or cooperative way, with different sectors of government seemingly unaware of others' actions. For a State Sustainability Strategy to work, the current inconsistencies need to be resolved through improvements in the integration of policy-making between different agencies.

The Commission believes that the Precautionary Principle needs to be given an operational interpretation; a process that could be encouraged through the Sustainability Strategy being developed. Without such a principle being given effect to, it would be difficult to see how a long term commitment to sustainability could be achieved. The Commission is working with the EPA to develop a position statement on the precautionary principle as applied to environmental decisions. The statement could then provide a model to develop a social equivalent.

Appropriate resourcing is also seen as necessary, for the implementation of a State Sustainability Strategy. Without a comprehensive commitment from the Government, it will be difficult to achieve a sustainable future.

The State Sustainability Strategy should build on work already being done, and recognize the leadership that exists within the State currently. Much has been done from within and outside Government that will provide excellent building blocks from which to build a more sustainable future.

We wish you luck in your deliberations and invite you to contact us to discuss relevant issues.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Bailey  
Chairman

9 May 2002