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Professor Peter Newman  
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Department of Premier and Cabinet  
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Dear Professor Newman

## **STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY**

I write in response to correspondence from the Hon Dr Geoff Gallop, Premier, on 8 January 2002 to the Minister for Disability Services seeking comment from agencies within her portfolio on the consultation paper *Focus on the Future: Opportunities for Sustainability in Western Australia*.

The Disability Services Commission thanks you, Michael Rowe and Rebecca Armstrong from the Sustainability Policy Unit for your presentations to Corporate Executive and to the Asset Based Community Development Workshop held on 26 February. The presentations generated considerable interest and assisted in developing a shared understanding of sustainability as well as identifying areas that the Sustainability Policy Unit and the Commission could work together on in the future.

### **Responses To Identified Key Questions**

#### **Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?**

The Commission strongly agrees that sustainability, as defined in the paper, is fundamental to the achievement of "the kind of inclusive communities we all wish to live in". The inclusion of social as well as economic and environmental factors in the definition of sustainability is particularly supported.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 1998, shows that 19.5 percent, or one in five people in Western Australia have a disability.

The Survey revealed that 93 percent of the population with a disability live in the community. For those people who require assistance, 93 percent of the support provided is provided from informal sources such as families, friends, neighbours and community groups.

People may have a disability at any age, however, the likelihood of having a disability increases as people get older. For example, almost five percent of the population under five years has a disability compared to almost 50 percent of Western Australians over 60 years of age. On the basis of ABS disability data and mid-level population projections, the Commission estimates that the total number of people with disabilities will increase by 48 percent by the year 2021.

The proposed State Sustainability Strategy provides an appropriate and opportune framework to address this anticipated demographic change.

The creation of an inclusive community is central to the work of the Commission. Throughout the world it is increasingly being recognised that individuals with strong social networks both live longer and recover from illness faster than those without such networks. People with strong social networks also use less disability and health services than those without these supports.

The fundamental importance of this is reflected in the Commission's Strategic Plan, which identifies three goals:

- Strengthen Individuals, Families and Carers;
- Strengthen Communities; and
- Strengthen Partnerships and Support Services.

### **What benefits could flow if sustainability was taken seriously?**

The creation of a sustainable community that can be accessed by people of all ages and abilities and where formal and informal services and networks are strong would have the following benefits.

- The quality of life of people with disabilities will be improved as they will be able to live as independently as possible within the community and to do the things that most of us tend to take for granted such as living in an ordinary house, catching public transport, working and socialising with friends.
- Carers, families and friends are less likely to have to be separated from their loved ones because the person with a disability has had to relocate to the city to be near services or to be placed into an institution.
- Seniors and others who develop disabilities in the future would be able to stay in their homes much longer and would be able to maintain their quality of life, networks and the contributions they make to their families and communities.
- Businesses of all types would benefit through the expanding customer base of people with disabilities, their cares, families and friends.
- Businesses could access new lucrative markets including, for example, new national and international tourism opportunities if Western Australia was promoted as an accessible, safe and welcoming location.
- Taxpayers and the community at large would benefit as the rapidly increasing demand for services will be kept at a significantly lower level.

### **In your opinion what opportunities exist to pursue sustainability?**

Opportunities exist throughout all levels of Government, the private sector and community organisations to pursue sustainability. Policies, standards and legislation can significantly promote the achievement, or otherwise of sustainability principles.

The following suggestions are made concerning promoting the application of sustainability.

- Extend the existing sustainability principles listed on Page 4 of the discussion paper to include sustainability principles in relation to creating an accessible community. This could be achieved by including a principle with wording such as: “information, services and facilities should be designed to sustain people of all ages and abilities within their communities.”
- Develop performance indicators for sustainability.
- Encourage the inclusion of sustainability within the judging criteria for Government and private sector awards including the Premier’s Awards.
- Consider appropriate ways to integrate sustainability performance indicators into planning cycles and reporting requirements.
- Promote sustainability principles by integrating them into educational programs at primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

It is noted that the Sustainability Unit is raising the level of awareness and debate on sustainability issues by organising seminars on key sustainability issues. The Commission would be interested in jointly working with the Sustainability Unit to:

- jointly host a forum with the disability sector when key overseas speakers from PLAN (Planned Lifetime Advisory Network) return to the State in September / October 2002; and
- provide support to the State Sustainability Unit to present the Sustainability Strategy, highlighting the framework for universal design and creating inclusive communities, at the inaugural Universal Design Stream of the International Federation on Ageing 6th Global Conference, Maturity Matters, Perth 27-30 October 2002.

### **What is the role of Government, business and the community in facilitating change to be more sustainable.**

The role of Government, business and the community in facilitating change to be more sustainable is essential. Partnership approaches with clearly identified and agreed aims and win-win outcomes are favoured. Government can have a key role in ensuring that all key stakeholder groups have appropriate opportunities to be involved.

### **What Best Practice examples exist, if any to demonstrate how sustainability is being progressed?**

The Council of (Commission) Funded Agencies, COFA, recently conducted a forum **Creative Solutions: NGOs Working with Business**. A copy of the forum program and proceedings are attached as they contain many examples of the application of sustainability principles to create inclusive communities, (ATTACHMENT 1).

Given the diverse nature of initiatives being undertaken by the Commission to create more inclusive and accessible Western Australian communities a broad range of examples have been included. These examples demonstrate both statewide initiatives as well as smaller local ones as both are considered necessary to create a sustainable community.

- **Creating an Accessible Community** is a fundamental requirement of an inclusive community. The main strategy that the Commission is undertaking to create Western Australia as an accessible community is through the **Disability Service Plan (DSP)** requirement contained in the Disability Services Act 1993. Currently throughout Western Australia approximately 250 public authorities, including 142 Local Governments, are implementing their DSPs. There are significant access improvements taking place statewide as public authorities work with people with disabilities and other Government and community groups to improve the accessibility of public information, services and facilities.

The Commission has a partnership approach to assisting public authorities to make their services accessible and, as new challenges are addressed, innovative solutions are being jointly developed.

- Many public authorities informally report that their initiatives introduced for customers with disabilities have also improved services for other community members including seniors, parents with children in prams, cyclists, tourists and people with English as a second language,
- Commission staff contribute to the development of relevant **national, state and local legislation, policies and standards** such as the Accessible Public Transport Standards, Building Code of Australia, Australian Standards on Access and R-Codes, to ensure access issues are appropriately addressed.
- In response to requests from the development and construction industries and building regulators, the '**Buildings – A Guide to Access Requirements**' manual has been jointly developed to promote best practice in the provision of access in the built environment. A pamphlet has also been produced for Local Governments to distribute at the time a planning or building permit is requested. The resource, which is freely available from the Commission's website, was launched at the 2001 combined WA State Conference of the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors and Building Designers Association of Western Australia. The value of this partnership approach is demonstrated by the high demand for pamphlets to distribute to developers and the fact that the Building Designer's Association purchased a copy of the manual for each of their members.
- The **Accessing New Markets** project has been jointly developed by the peak industry groups in the tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail industries working together with the disability field to identify ways to create new markets by making services accessible to people with disabilities. A series of industry 'think tanks' were held to identify issues that needed to be addressed from both the perspectives of people with disabilities and business. The process resulted in increased understanding of the various perspectives and highlighted the need for more information to be available to those working in the tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail industries. A training package and video, *You Can Make A Difference to Customer Relations for People with Disabilities*, was funded through

the Lotteries Commission and is being widely used throughout the tourism, hospitality, entertainment and retail industries.

- The 2001 **National Law Week** focus on Equity and Access provided the Commission with the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Law Society in Western Australia. A series of seminars and guest speakers provided information to law staff, students and interested community members highlighting the issues faced by people with disabilities in accessing legal services and facilities.
- As our community ages more people develop a hearing impairment. Cinema designers, developers, managers, people who are deaf or hearing impaired and their service providers have, with the Commission, produced '**Cinema Complexes,- Assistive Listening Devices and Captioning Guidelines.**' The project also involves hearing health professionals informing potential users of hearing aids of technologies that will enable them to use cinema hearing augmentation technology.
- In partnership with architects, designers, developers, the disability field, government and non-government agencies, the Commission has established a **Universal Design Network** to promote products, information, technology, environments and transport that can be used by people of all ages and abilities. The Network has conducted workshops on various topics including housing and the design of accessible public information, services and facilities and the inaugural National Conference on Universal Design. The Network has also promoted Universal Design by participating in the Universal Design competition which has primary, secondary and tertiary categories.

Currently the Network is coordinating the inaugural Universal Design stream for the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Ageing, Maturity Matters, to be held in Perth in October 2002.

- Commission staff are developing **Local Plans** to maximise networks and to build on strengths within each community. Strategies used include asset mapping and initiatives that enhance community networks. While these networks are increasing opportunities for people with disabilities and their families, they are also creating sharing communities that are more inclusive of others. For example, at Cannington, inclusion initiatives are benefiting Muslim women as well as people with disabilities.
- The **Recharge Program** has involved local families, the City of Joondalup, Red Cross Stirling Carers Respite Centre and Arena Joondalup to create a ten week fitness and personal development course. This program continues to run independently from the Arena Joondalup and is accessed not only by parents of children with disabilities but also the general public. It has provided the opportunity for people to link into and network in their local community resulting in increased self-esteem, motivation and general wellbeing (thereby being an important family support initiative). These connections have resulted in other family run community activities such as Roller skating family days, coffee mornings and self-esteem workshops. This program was nominated for the State West Credit Union Award and a copy of the nomination is attached (ATTACHMENT 2).

- **Men's Weekends** have been held for fathers of a child with a disability, particularly sole parent fathers who were also experiencing isolation, lack of self-esteem and motivation. Parents have assumed a strong leadership role and the group liaises with funding bodies to resource the weekends and also maintain connections with each other.
- **Northern Link Parent Group** was established by parents in 1995 to look at developing recreational opportunities and futures planning for their sons and daughters. Recently the group has been linked with PLAN from Canada and is now investigating investment options for family members with local financial institutions.
- **US (Unlimited Support)** involves local families, Womens' Healthworks and the Red Cross Stirling Carers' Respite Centre who have run a group which includes massage, aromatherapy, golf days and boat trips. This program has lead to the successful formation of other groups such as a writers group and a parent newsletter
- **Arts Exposure Program** involves Disability in the Arts and Disadvantage in the Arts Australia (WA Inc) (DADAA), Western Australian Department of Education (EDWA) and the City of Joondalup. Whilst catering for children and young adults with disabilities it has provided opportunities for parents and siblings to meet in a strong inclusive environment. Members have participated in community celebrations at the City of Joondalup. The program is now fully funded and administered by DADAA and EDWA.
- Inspired by Gold Medal Para-Olympian Jamie Dunross and driven by a local committee that includes people with disabilities, **Rotary~Sail~Into~Life** is an innovative approach to providing sailing experiences for all. The club provides opportunities for any person to sail solo in custom designed sailing boats that are unsinkable and able to be controlled by a person with only chin movement. The Club has membership in the Mandurah Sailing Club and all those involved become part of the every-day-community of people who love sailing. The community benefits greatly from the involvement of people who would not usually access sailing and people with disabilities and their families are enjoying exciting new opportunities to be involved and have fun. Clubs have already commenced in three Western Australia coastal towns and it is planned that Rotary Clubs right around the Western Australia coastline will sponsor new clubs.
- **The F.A.I.R. (Fellowship, Awareness, Inclusion and Relaxation) Project** provides opportunities for people with disabilities, families, friends and neighbours to enjoy renewal through a series of residential retreats. Participants design their own "fun oriented" programs. To date all involved have developed rich relationships and discovered new confidence in relating to each other. Skills in supporting people with disabilities have also been developed. Outcomes include the development of natural support networks in families and neighbourhoods that enable interdependency and create exciting alternatives to service-oriented formal supports. The project is strongly supported by Government at a local, State and Commonwealth level and by local industry. Fairbridge Village in Pinjarra is the primary co-ordinating body and provides a comfortable, accessible and supportive environment

- **Kwilena** is a peak group driven by parents and people with disabilities. The group is effecting change in community attitudes with the goal of increasing inclusion in all aspects of community life for people with disabilities and their families. Commission staff and key local services provide support and participate in the group. The group is an exceptional example of creative and dynamic partnerships. A one hour interactive workshop developed by Kwilena is being presented in places such as TAFE, Nursing Homes and recreation programs. It is creating strong interest and commitment to community inclusion. Outcomes include increasing collaboration between agencies and the strengthening of the voice of people with disabilities and their families. Also, growing community awareness and increased natural supports combine to reduce the need for service provision and (for what Kwilena calls) “paid friends”. Through Kwilena the community is sharing in making real the concept of “a good life for everyone” in Mandurah/Murray.

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

Research that will underpin the development of performance indicators in relation to the social aspect of sustainability. In addition, promotion of the theory base of asset based community development and positive examples of local initiatives.

**In a general sense what else should WA be doing to contribute nationally, regionally and globally to progress sustainability?**

Network and contribute to global progress through sharing ideas and collaborative research.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the State Sustainability Strategy. The Commission would very much like to work in partnership with you to further develop the strategy. Please do not hesitate to contact Richard May, Manager, Community Access and Information Branch on phone number 9426 9328 if you have any queries concerning this strategy.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ruth Shean  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

18 March 2002

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## **ATTACHMENT 2**

### **SUBMISSION FOR THE GROUP CATEGORY Statewest Achievement Awards**

#### **RECHARGE: AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO BUILD COMMUNITY**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 1998, shows that 19.5 percent, or one in five people in Western Australia have a disability.

The Survey revealed that 93 percent of the population with a disability live in the community. For those that people who require assistance, 93 percent of the support provided is provided from informal sources such as families, friends, neighbours and community groups. Of the 93 percent of sources of care provided, 40 percent is provided by informal sources and 53 percent is from informal sources and formal support sources.

People may have a disability at any age, however, the likelihood of having a disability increases as people get older. For example, almost five percent of the population under five years has a disability compared to almost 50 percent of Western Australians over 60 years of age. On the basis of ABS disability data and mid-level population projections, the Commission estimates that the total number of people with disabilities will increase by 48 percent by the year 2021.

Local Area Co-ordination (LAC) is a program developed by the Disability Services Commission to support people with disabilities and their informal networks to remain in the community of their choice with whatever supports they need to maintain their quality of life. LAC had its beginnings in rural West Australia in 1989 and since that time it has grown to a program that has complete coverage across all of West Australia and is now in the process of being replicated across most of the states in Australia.

As the title suggests, the role of LAC is to co-ordinate and monitors the delivery of services as well as assist individuals and families to be able to purchase additional supports in a manner that reflects their personal situations and life aspirations.

In the Metropolitan area, LAC is divided into districts with on average, 9 – 10 LACS' and a Supervisor working with 500- 800 local people with disabilities and their families. The Wanneroo District, which is the subject of this story, covers the area from Duncraig in the South to Seabird in the north. As such, it covers an area characterised by issues prevalent to people with disabilities and their families in metropolitan and country areas defining feature of the area. This incorporates the Shire of Joondalup and Wanneroo as well as parts of the City of Stirling, is that in incorporating the Shire of Wanneroo/City of Joondalup, it encompasses the fastest growing metropolitan shires in Australia.

One of the predominant themes in the area is the large in migration from other parts of Perth, with large numbers of young families who are moving to the area to access affordable housing. In doing this however, these families often move away from established suburbs with their associated infrastructure and they move to an area, which is often geographically remote from the informal supports that they were once able to access in their role as parents.

Coupled with this factor are a number of issues that compound this degree of isolation.



1. The Wanneroo area has a very high rate of economic out migration. Each day most workers commute to other areas of Perth as there are fewer employment opportunities in the local area as yet. This factor is compounded by the absence of a well-developed transport system. The train stops at Currambine and suburbs north rely on buses, some suburbs may have only a couple of scheduled routes a day. Those households with only one car experience further senses of isolation as the car often commutes out of the area during the day.
2. Formal services and supports struggle to keep pace with the population growth statistics. As such those services that people with disabilities would normally rely on to supplement the care they would be able to access for informal sources are experiencing long delay and inadequate amounts of support. This represents a double disadvantage.
3. Public Housing policies (New Living Project) are assisting low-income earners to be able to access affordable housing. While this is a great advantage to home owners, it has the effect of relocating people away from suburbs with better developed infrastructure to areas where low income may further disadvantage this group of people.

As a result of the combination of all the above factors, the role of the LAC in the Wanneroo District has been shaped largely by issues that are often found in the population of people with disabilities and their families. These issues are the collocation of disability, poverty and geography. Many of the families that LAC's have contact with report a sense of feeling alone, not knowing others out there, not feeling adequately resourced personally to change their circumstances and a sense of struggling to keep their heads above the water.

Part of the LAC's role is to support people with disabilities and their families in determining their own needs and to assist in organising the appropriate supports and services to meet those needs.

The key strategy for LAC has been to build individual, family and community self-sufficiency. This is achieved in a variety of ways such as assisting people to join together, to discuss local issues and to mobilise together to address issues of local concern.

This platform is the start of assisting people to develop a consciousness of personal and local issues. The role of the LAC becomes important as a catalyst by providing support and assistance to develop strategies to address these issues and meeting personal needs. Such strategies offer people the opportunity to overcome isolation and loneliness to share resources and power for social change in their local community as well as assist individuals and families to be able to purchase additional supports in a manner that reflected their personal situation and life aspirations.

The RECHARGE program was a response to these types of issues that was developed by LAC's Caterina Scriva and Susan Piper in partnership with a number of local families.

The whole concept came about from two colleagues( Susan and Caterina) sharing ideas, looking at commonalities across areas, brainstorming and problem solving with regard to common issues within the local suburbs. Through this they discovered the common

theme of people experiencing the same issues of isolation, lack of self-esteem, motivation and the demands placed on parents as carers of a child with a disability.

The opportunity was provided for interested parents in the local area to meet informally at the LAC office for morning tea to chat about what they would like to do. The discussion revolved around what would make their caring role easier and what would inspire them. Basically getting them back into the things they enjoyed doing before they became a parent and carer of a child with a disability.

The outcome of these discussions was the production of the “RECHARGE” Survey put together by the parents and LAC’s. (see attached) An overwhelming response was received indicating an even greater need in the local community than originally anticipated. Another surprising response was the number of people who were keen to do a health and fitness program. This is where the Very Important Parents (VIP) was developed as part of the RECHARGE program.

The LAC’s explored the existing resources in the local community, which would support the VIP program. The key theme for the program was to offer the opportunity for local people to come together and engage in structured activity programs with a strong health and fitness focus, in particular caring for oneself

This was made possible by accessing the resources of local council, Red Cross Stirling Carers Respite and the local recreation centre. The council supported the program by employing trained carers to provide support for children with special needs at the recreation centre. This was previously impossible for parents to leave children with special needs in local creches due to lack of resources and trained staff.

LAC’s met with a local Personal trainer who was responsive to the needs and interests of Parents and Carers in the local community. With the assistance of feedback and input from parents and LAC’s the personal trainer was able to develop an eight week program. This covered a variety of themes, which varied from week to week. Included were talks on healthy eating, stress and survival, massage and other lifestyle issues in addition to exercise and sports.

A strong emphasis existed on building teamwork and providing opportunities for people to interact. A reduced group fee was negotiated with the recreation centre, which previously was not available within their fee structure.

As part of the Red Cross National Carer Respite funding campaign, the RECHARGE Program was identified as an appropriate program to fund. This enabled twenty participants to attend three times per week. The Red Cross fully funded each session for the eight week program.

It is not as easy as it sounds to offer the opportunity for people to come together, broaden their social networks, offer each other information, advice and to be able to support each other. As often, parents and carers of the people with disabilities believe that their needs are secondary to those that they care for and that they have little to offer to others. As a result the role of caring becomes all encompassing and subsuming where people who have cared for many years of the life report a loss of their own sense of identity and self esteem

This is where the partnership between the LAC’s and the key family members became important as the process for planning for activities and events was a strongly

collaborative one. All participants in the planning process subsequently became stakeholders and assumed ownership of the process and its outcomes. It ceased to be seen as “another program “ on offer to Carers, and it became a dynamic process where the participant used their own connections, networks and local knowledge to reach out to those people in the community who were the most alienated or isolated.

Often this involved people taking personal responsibility for picking particular people up as they were known not to have cars or would struggle to make it along coping with the normal hassles of organising alternative care or even feeling good enough about oneself to be motivated to participate.

During the program reports coming from the participants revealed that a number of things were starting to happen in the local community as a result of the connections people were making.

People were starting to report increased feelings of well being and a balance between caring for their children and caring for themselves. People also expressed feelings of being better connected with local people and better informed about local events, activities, services, supports and changes in their lifestyles. This provided them with opportunities to gain a better level of fitness and having something they looked forward to and could plan towards (see attached magazine article and attached support letters from parents).

Overcoming isolation is not just a matter of offering the opportunity to allow people to come together. It also needs to offer people the opportunity to become better resourced both personally and as a community. As a result of the common activities that people have shared there have been a growth in the capacity people have felt to take control of the circumstances that effect their lives. People have been actively supporting each other in practical ways such as transport, but also have been able to

jointly plan together to shape the circumstances that surround their lives. This has included participating in working groups to influence that nature of service delivery in the their community as well as discussion groups to share information and offer practical and emotional assistance to others in the neighbourhood.

Following the success of the first term, the LAC's role continued to be one of maintaining a trusting relationship with the families involved and a continued investment in supporting the continuation of the RECHARGE program.

Planning was now under way for second term but without the funding support of the Red Cross, LAC's continued to work closely with individuals by encouraging and motivating them to attend and in some cases subsidising the costs through LAC untied funding. Although the numbers in some sessions were reduced the commitment by the core group of participants was maintained. This core group in time became the prime motivators and networkers, encouraging other people to participate. By the end of second term people from the general community were participating in the program and it no longer had a disability focus.

In third term, participants together with the personal Training Company had taken control of the planning process and have independently applied to additional funding sources to support the program.

The RECHARGE program is now a recognised community program facilitated by the recreation centre.(see attached)

The actions of the LAC's have been worthy of note in that they have worked in a way to support local people to address issues of local concern. This is done in a way that does not take over the ownership of the issues but work towards empowering local people in the development of local solutions. In doing so this provides the opportunity for local people to take ownership of the issues.

This work is central to the role of LAC and this program has demonstrated the real and tangible benefits of working alongside local communities in facilitative and support ways. As such it represents a strong contribution to Community Development in the Wanneroo district.

Core Participants are:

Caterina Scriva LAC Heathridge

Susan Piper LAC Ocean Reef

Jeanette Hyder

Wendy Bell

Shirley Webb

Charmeon Van Louenholt

Debbie Beasley

Pauline Bird

Mandy Daniels

Georgie Emery

The program was made possible with the generous support of Carrie Paine Coombes of the Stirling Red Cross Carer Respite Center.

Nomination made by Mike Cubbage, Local Area Co-ordinator Supervisor, Disability Services Commission ph 0419 989 711