

Gerard Mullen
44 Harrison Road
Armadale WA 6112

Ph:93996407

22 March 2002

Professor Peter Newman
Director, Sustainability Policy Unit
15th Floor, 197 St Georges Tce
Perth WA 6000

Dear Professor Newman,

Thankyou for the opportunity to submit my ideas on Sustainability in Western Australia. As a bushland manager in local government I am regularly reminded of the need for an urgent swing in the attitudes of West Australian citizens toward the issue of sustainability. Having observed the ever increasing demand of consumers in modern society we must realize that this can not be maintained forever. The time has come for radical change to occur and therefore I consider sustainability the worthiest goal of any government.

Sustainability is an issue that can no longer be swept under the carpet and could result in substantial benefits to West Australians if it was pursued more seriously than it has up to the present. Possible benefits could include increased employment opportunity's in the research and development industry, increased exportation of sustainable technology's and increased environmental awareness in the community. With the widely accepted application of sustainable technology's and the positive outcomes they provide I believe that a swing toward a more harmonious and empowered society would result.

In my experience numerous opportunity's exist to pursue sustainability. Often however the largest hurdle is the cost of implementing sustainable practices both in industry and in the community.

One particular area I would like to focus on is sustainable development. In order to start a transition of society into sustainable practices we must address one of the most obvious areas in need of sustainable action, which effects the majority of West Australians. Flow on effects of consumers after the initial development will occur long into the future. In the case of an unsustainable development it's negative effects are hard to comprehend in terms of consumption of non- renewable resources over the life of the building.

While it is hard to associate development and sustainability together much can be done to reduce the impact of development. Greater application in the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power, recycled building materials, renewable building materials, harvesting of rain water, recycling of Grey water, composting of household waste, retention of significant trees and/or vegetation on urban blocks, clearing restrictions, water wise plant selections for gardens and weather sensitive architectural designs.

All of the above are commonly known measures of sustainable practices yet few are widely practiced. The question must be asked why? Various conclusions can be reached such as, cost, lack of choice in the market place, limited desire to accept new sustainable technology's, the list goes on.

It is at this point I would see a role for governments, business and the community to facilitate change in the scenario above.

Although the government already provides subsidy's for renewable energy it is clearly not enough to break the trend of mains power and water being the preferred choice in all developments. In fact the cost of many components required to develop a sustainable building would be enough to discourage most. Increased government subsidy's would be advantageous to get the ball rolling and bring sustainable buildings into the suburbs. Something in line with the current first home owners grant could be applied to all developments in the form of a sustainability grant to make the sustainable option more desirable to currently used options.

Business would benefit from such a situation as it has from the stimulation created by the First home Buyers Grant. The role of business in this instance would be to accommodate for sustainable features in the design and construction. Once major builders created a blue print for sustainable buildings others would follow suit and with a combination of promotion by the government and marketing by the business sector the community would be encouraged to embrace sustainable practices starting with every day living.

In this instance the role of the community would be to maintain an open mind and consider how significant each contribution toward sustainability can be. With society adopting these developments the start of change has been initiated which can only lead to an increased focus on sustainability as the average person can not only now grasp the concept but see it in their suburb.

Best practice examples which exist on sustainability in my experience at least are the Piney Lakes Environment Center in Winthrop and the Murdoch University's sustainable energy section. Both harness wind and solar energy together with passive design to best utilize what the environment can plentifully offer us.

Research and development necessary to all sustainability outcomes would typically include viability studies. These studies should not however be compared to conventional

methods, products or practices but rather evaluated on there own merits no matter how small the contribution that is made to sustainability.

If WA wishes to contribute and progress to sustainability on a wider front we may consider setting goals for ourselves to reach whilst sharing our facilitating skills and new developments. National and international forums may be establish fresh waves of thought and educate developing countries to discourage them from following down the path of many developed Western countries.

I would once again like to thankyou for this opportunity and I look forward to the upcoming Sustainability Seminar Series.

Yours Sincerely

Gerard Mullen