

25th March 2002

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Professor Peter Newman
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Department of the Premier and Cabinet
15th Floor, 197 St Georges Tce
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Dear Professor Newman,

Re: Focus on the Future - State Sustainability Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned strategy. It is an exceptionally important issue, the outcome of which will affect everyone in Western Australia and perhaps even beyond.

Western Australia has been my home since it's 150th year in 1979. Since that time I have been fortunate enough to experience the lifestyle of both its urban and rural environments. My work history includes both the Horticulture and Viticulture Industries and Local Government (planning, building, parks & gardens). My personal experience also includes the Agriculture Industry.

I am currently studying Horticulture and Natural Resource Management at Murdoch TAFE to acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable me to contribute to the care of our resources.

Please find following a response to the key questions outlined in Box 1 of your consultation paper: -

1. Sustainability is obviously a worthwhile pursuit. It is in fact a *necessary pursuit* if we hope to achieve and maintain both population and economic growth.
2. If sustainability were taken more seriously: -
 - Our ability to continue to reside in this state would not be in question. At present our capacity to maintain population growth is already in doubt - simply focussing on our water resources.
 - We will be able to continue to produce food for our own consumption, plus the export market, if we look after our soils.
 - We could become a self-sufficient state.
 - The integrity of our native flora and fauna would be maintained.
 - An improved quality of life would be present for all West Australians as a result of the improved quality of our food, water and environment.
 - The positive and proactive focus on the future would help remove the sense of hopelessness that is present in our youth and aborigines.

- We would have a sense of pride as a State for setting the standard using the 'triple bottom line' principle.
 - We would be carrying out our commitment to implement Agenda 21.
3. In my experience, the opportunities to pursue sustainability are only limited by two main areas: -
- The lack of thorough research data, education, support and examples at a Government level, for those that *know* their current industry or personal practices are not sustainable and would like to change. Or conversely, for those that would like to commence a sustainable industry or practice, but find that the aforementioned limitations together with the expense, a disincentive.
 - The 'mind set' of the person/s concerned in managing, or carrying out a particular industry/activity – usually stemming from a lack of understanding, a fear of change and/or an inability to see the bigger picture. There is also the information barrier created by an 'us and them' attitude in some rural areas towards city people and their ideas and vice versa.

The present opportunities to pursue sustainability include organic and biodynamic horticultural and agricultural practices, chemical free personal care and cleaning products, increased use of solar power and passive solar housing design.

There is a viable market in both Australia and overseas for the meat, fruit, vegetables and wine produced this way. Chemical free wool is now also in demand by the European market.

In the last 5 years or so, I have noticed a large increase in the awareness and concern of the general public about chemicals in our food and water supply. The effect it may be having on the health (and behaviour) of children, the build-up of toxins in the system of humans, animals, fish, the waterways, air and soils are all of great concern.

It follows that this concern will create a greater demand for chemical free foods, personal care products and cleaning products - which we will need to be able to supply.

There is a substantial amount of water used in areas such as production nurseries, market gardens, golf courses and recreation areas, along with water and nutrient leaching due to our sandy soils. There must be a way that we could use a reticulated treated wastewater system, to lessen the burden on our groundwater supplies and perhaps even reduce the use of synthetic fertilisers.

In the domestic areas, there is the opportunity to design and implement an affordable substitute to the existing disposal of sewage and/or grey water, that will recycle the waste for use on the lawns and gardens of each individual lot.

This system is already being used by some commercial properties, where it is more viable due to the quantity of waste involved and is cost effective.

I would suggest the inclusion of rainwater collection and storage tanks into the Building Regulation's standard minimum requirements.

We also need to stop using so much plastic! A really good start would be to stop providing plastic bags as carry-bags at supermarkets etc. I can see no reason why we cannot return to paper bags and boxes – the bags being produced from recycled paper, and the boxes from recycled cardboard. Polystyrene products e.g. cups and packaging should also be on the 'hit list'.

4. The role of government, business and the community in facilitating change to be more sustainable is to *work together towards this vision*; Intergovernmental departments also need to work as a team.

- Government – Provide the **infrastructure** at both a State and Local level e.g. C.A.L.M., D.E.P., Ministry for Planning & Health Department. Local Government via Town Planning Schemes, Building Regulations and Environmental Health policies.

Promote the idea to the general public to increase understanding and therefore support, with advertising campaigns e.g. the current Biodiversity advertising on TV.

Incentives - to encourage participation e.g. awards.

Regulatory control - as a disincentive for those that have a lot to gain financially from breaking the current laws and little to lose from current fines. e.g. increase fines for clear felling without government approval by developers, for the dumping of rubbish in Parks or Reserves, pollution, abuse of water restrictions etc. and employ more people to monitor these laws (which would also be of help to reduce the unemployed in rural and urban areas).

Support for those people that seek information, training, financial assistance etc to commence a sustainable practice.

Examples of sustainable practices currently undertaken should be at every educational institution at every level of education. Further, they should be utilised at every Government Department/Building. The government needs to 'walk the talk' and therefore teach by example. If the sight of these practices becomes commonplace, and the Government is seen to be leading the way (as it should), the attitude of the community towards both the government and the ideal will be a positive one.

Educate the public (and business) about how they can financially benefit by making a few changes that will also help save resources.

- Business – **Accountability** to both the Government and the people. To take on the **responsibility** of modifying any unsustainable practices. To **adapt** to any changes with the knowledge that it is for the greater good, and that they too will benefit in the long term. To recognise the **marketing potential** of their sustainable practices and/or products via consumer support for Best Practice. To seize the **opportunity** to

design and develop new products or value-add to raw materials. Also to see the potential to tap into overseas markets with sustainable designs or products.

- Community - **Support** the government ideal. Support those businesses that carry out sustainable practices and/or supply products. To encourage each other to **adapt to change** and modify any unsustainable practices at home. To listen and **act on information** given about what we can do to contribute at the domestic level.

5. Some examples of sustainable practices I am aware of include:

- Albany wind farm
- Melville City Council's Piney Lakes Environmental Centre
- Agro forestry (though more research is needed on effects to the soil and water supplies, and harvesting and transport issues in remote areas)
- Solar powered reticulation
- Solar powered heating
- Recycling
- Value-adding of green waste to mulch
- The management practices of John Forest National Park
- Replanting of native vegetation in previously cleared areas
- Organic vineyards, herb farms, fruit and vegetable producers
- Biodynamic beef producers
- 'Biomax' reticulated waste systems
- Biological control of pests
- The requirement of licences to establish aquaculture farms
- The requirement of licences for fishing
- Restricting the use of lawn & garden reticulation systems
- The production of chemical and antibiotic free chickens and eggs

6. The research and development required ensuring that sustainability outcomes can be achieved needs to be unlimited and thorough. I believe the committed officers of the CSIRO, AGWA, CALM and the Ministry for Planning could best advise the government on this issue.

The research and development should not be limited by an unrealistic budget allowance.

7. We could further contribute to the general progression of sustainability by sharing our research, supporting those countries that have no means to help themselves, keeping the subject alive by ensuring it is on the agenda at state and federal conferences, ongoing education and promotion on the subject to both government workers and the general public.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission and I would like to say how terrific it is to see our State Government embracing the ideals set out in Agenda 21.