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Sustainability Submission: from Kath Mathwin, Kojonup

My Vision for the Future:

- + Every tiny bit of remaining native vegetation would be declared a sacred site, it is so much easier to revegetate from existing flora, even only one tree. A total moratorium on clearing. All remaining bush on farms would be fenced, as otherwise it is actually slowly being cleared, all older trees will die in the end, nothing is able to regenerate to take its place
- + About 30% of all agricultural land would be remnant or regenerated native habitat. Another 30% would be forestry, perennial pasture or other deep rooted, permanent plantings. The rest would be used for cropping etc. Maybe, even better, all cropping would be done into perennials as is beginning in NSW and SA already.
- + There would never be any bare ground, always a covering of pasture, stubble or growth of some sort, so infinitely less erosion from rain or wind.
- + Weeds would be eliminated from all natural remnants, regenerations and reserves, legislation would be in place so that allowing weeds (pastures, forestry trees or whatever) to spread beyond the boundary fence was as illegal as allowing offensive noises, smells, water etc to spread over neighbouring property
- + Feral animals would be eliminated
- + There would be no more extinctions of native flora or fauna
- + 99% of all waste would be recycled
- + Road verges would have 20 metre extensions on one side, these would be replanted if necessary to be good pathways for travelling wildlife.
- + Some roads would be realigned if that fitted in better with contour working of farmland (which would cost money but save more in the long term with road maintenance)
- + All rainfall would be utilised as in natural bush, never drained away except in natural waterways
- + People would have learned to love and appreciate our unique assets, which is perhaps the most important thing of all, if we really cared about what we have we would look after it!
- + We would understand our soils, the importance of micro-biology, minerals, soil structure etc.
- + A sustainability ethic would be instilled in everyone, flowing through to their attitudes and actions

Change

At the same time it has to be recognised that things can never be as they were 200 years ago. Even 200 years ago things were in no way as they would have been with no human habitation. Parkland clearing, no matter how charming, is probably inevitably dying out, so all those ancient trees are doomed, unless they can be incorporated into revegetation and provide the vital old growth nesting sites. Some areas of salinity will never recover, but they can provide excellent opportunities for aquaculture, to grow specialised salt tolerant species, or new valuable wetlands.

Response to the consultation paper:

Box 1 (dot point 1) Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?

Sustainability is a worthwhile pursuit if we have plans for people to remain living on our planet!

Box 1 (dot point 2) What are the benefits?

Preserving our Bio-diversity, all the unique life forms which still remain, there is so much still to be learnt, including many benefits and services which can be obtained from our natural heritage
Preserving our economic stability, by utilising (not exploiting) the natural benefits and services
Preserving our ability to feed our own people as well as many overseas
Preserving important areas of trade
Preserving jobs, particularly in the country
Preventing further run down of our water, land and air
This could be a very long list!

Box 1 (dot point 3) Opportunities

- * There are opportunities for new enterprises
- * Opportunities to get more people living in the regional areas
- * Opportunities for more people to gain an understanding of Australian native flora and fauna
- * Opportunities to ensure an environment still able to support human habitation in 100 years time

Box 1 (dot point 4) Role of Government, Business and Community

- * Government's role is to provide leadership One way of doing this is to look after all the reserves (including roadsides) which it is in any way responsible for, weeds and feral animals controlled or eliminated on all Government property
- * People in Government are aware that there are sustainability problems with the way we live, but, because these are not dramatic, really urgent problems, and because solutions are hard to identify (and may not be universally popular) they are not addressing these problems with the energy and expense they should. Money and effort, wisely committed now, will be repaid many times the over in ten, twenty or a hundred years from now. We should not be costing future generations anything
- * Government's role is to seek out people with understanding and experience in sustainable land use and listen to them, until Government really understands and admits the seriousness of the problems faced, and recognises that most of these problems can be overcome by already tried and proven landcare methods, which will be cost effective in the long term.
- * Government needs to ensure the preservation of all remaining native growth, reserves, roadsides, and on private property where owners are unable to cope. All remaining native remnants should be declared sacred and treated accordingly. They are at least as valuable a part of our heritage as old buildings
- * Government needs to bring in legislation which will fully protect all remaining flora and fauna.
- * Government needs support and work with environmental NGO's, to fund coordinators for LCDC's or equivalent local organizations, to provide efficient and knowledgeable agencies, giving easily accessible information on sustainable agricultural and environmental practices and able to promote successful ventures.
- * Government needs to see that job security and continuity for people in these areas of expertise is assured, continual changing conditions and personnel means that work done and experience gained is lost, that projects are not finished and that confidence and enthusiasm are destroyed, both for advisers and advice receivers
- * Government could facilitate the establishment of a Centre for a Sustainable Future, where information, encouragement advice and support could be found. Community Landcare Centres (Sustainable Landcare Centres would be a better name) are still needed in at least every Shire

Role of Business includes being open to change, to be prepared to put "sustainable" practices into their farms or other businesses, to do this they need to be confident that it will work without costing them their financial sustainability!
Role of Community is to accept and participate in proven sustainable practices, even though change is something we all hate!

Box 1 (dot point 5) Best practice examples (need to be identified and publicised)

We need to look at all the work done which people claim to be successful, on a local, rather than regional basis. If it can be shown that it was successful, even if it is not scientifically 'best practice' it needs to be publicised. An enormous amount of work has been done, not just fencing and planting, although often that is still what is most needed, some drainage ideas, some alternatives, using salt affected land profitably, different fertilisers, contouring, refencing. Success needs to be recognised and the information spread.

What about the bush though? Where are instances of 'best practise' here, who has paid for it, how can it be afforded by more land managers. Local experience is very useful.

Box 1 (dot point 6) Research and development needed Research so that we are more certain of what was once here and why it was as it was. Surveys, locally so that we have listed what we still have and monitoring, so that we know what is going on.

Research into why the beautiful, lately healthy Wandoo's are dying in the Kojonup area!

Box 1 (dot point 7) Generally

Somehow the 'Green' image needs to be made more universally acceptable, even 'environmentalist' seems to conjure up 'scum of the earth' sentiments in the minds of many people, no doubt because of some extremists, also the loss of jobs caused by some effects of environmental thinking, but many jobs can be lost when businesses change plans or close down too, they don't seem to arouse such widespread contempt. Perhaps all the environmental NGO's need to address this, together with government and agency personnel.

Road verges are also being cleared, necessary perhaps to allow the passage of big trucks and machinery, but some of these roadsides are home to plants and animals not yet even named, maybe never recorded. All responsible for roads (Government at all levels) should undertake immediate programs to realign roads where this would make maintenance easier, looking at the cost of maintenance of some badly designed roads and some of those surveyed in the horse and cart days, this would be a cost saving project. Also a 10 to 20 metre strip added to the road verge on one side would allow for much wider, safer, and more easily maintained roads. (Safer too for the birds which would remain on the bushy side instead of flitting across to their doom) This added area (only one or two hectares per kilometre) could be allowed to revegetate naturally if possible, or direct seeded with local flora, forming worthwhile passages for native fauna, and providing valuable experience to those responsible for the replanting, experience which can be made use of when extensive regeneration is undertaken on farms. Seed from these rehabilitated roadsides could also provide valuable seed resources for revegetation

It is important to control weeds too, roads are the perfect pathways for them, helped by graders

Australia soils are not rich, we say that we cannot possibly sustainably support many more people, yet the wheat we produce is shipped out to feed 180 million people, wool, meat, so much is exported, is this sustainable. Should we think about it?

\$1 billion a month is spent on defence, \$5 billion is suggested for NHT funding for the next 5 years. Should we try harder to get more money towards saving our environment, defending our bio-diversity. The value of sustainability needs to be instilled into the minds of all in power

Box 2 Professional associations

Scientists and agencies need work with primary producers, they are also professionals with skills, ideas and resources to contribute to sustainable land management, and a financial interest in sustainability. If professionals with other skills listen to, consider and analyse interesting findings in all localities, and help build on these experiences and disseminate information about situations which have already proven to be successful or to have failed much can be gained. Teachers, trained to enthuse and inform children at the schools about their environment. Journalists, to spread information in an easily readable way

Box 2 Community Groups The role of civil society is to learn about the world they live in, to appreciate its vulnerability, and how by changing their way of living they may be able to protect the whole environment now and in the future.

Box 2 Schools First teachers need to be trained, so that they appreciate the need to aim for sustainability, then they need to pass this appreciation on to students, (not always easy if the parents lack this understanding)

Box 2 Indigenous groups

Every opportunity to include indigenous people and to recognise any knowledge they have which could help with sustainability should be taken. Also, areas of employment could be opened up for indigenous people to participate in sustainability projects.

Box 2 Social welfare groups

Training, such as Greenskills, can help unemployed gain skills and experience which can be used by them to participate in sustainability work. Some work which needs doing needs no training or previous knowledge but could help provide satisfying jobs and improved self esteem for people looking for employment.

Box 2 Artists and creative associations

Television particularly could have an enormous role to play, remember Harry Butler, and so much is known about overseas animals etc because of David Attenborough. Top quality programs featuring the flora, fauna and scenery of Australia would get to a bigger audience, of all ages, than all the trained teachers and professional lecturers can ever hope to. There used to be more clubs and magazines, aimed at imparting knowledge about our natural heritage to children than there are now. Our only daily newspaper could be encouraged to resume the good journalism which used to be 'Eureka', now whittled down so much that it is quite hard to find. Promote Australian Bio-diversity in tourism products and crafts.

Box 2 Local Government need to understand their own districts, listen to experts and interested locals and facilitate sustainable work and ideas as far as they possibly can. Many support the Landcare Centres which are so important. Local Government needs to show leadership too, with recycling stations, low water use public areas, weed control along roads etc.

Points I would like to make in Box 3

Legislation to make people responsible for the spread of weeds, even the Government agencies if they bring them into the country and recommend them

Farmers and pastoralists need more help to really understand their soils and the effects of land management

We need to use our rich biological resources, eg kangaroos and emus and plants, but not over exploit them

Being one of 25 biodiversity hot spots could be a great opportunity for tourism, again being careful not to over exploit

Government could legislate for houses and other buildings to all be built along environmentally friendly lines, understood now by many architects and builders

We have tides, wind and sun in abundance for power, solar and stored energy in plantations can all be developed

To develop leading energy centre in this state we need to employ the leading scientists (this applies to sustainability too)

With so much work to be done sustainability shouldn't be seen as a social problem, it is an opportunity to use more people to do more rewarding work in more areas, might cost more money in the short term but we will be more sustainable in the long run.

Best wishes for the success of this initiative, Kath Mathwin

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