

**COMMENTS ON THE STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY
DEVELOPED BY THE SUSTAINABILITY POLICY UNIT,
DEPARTMENT OF THE PREMIER AND CABINET**

The Department of Land Administration Services (DOLA) and the Western Australian Land Information System (WALIS) appreciates this opportunity to comment upon the consultation paper for the State Sustainability Strategy for Western Australia, *Focus on the Future: Opportunities for Sustainability in Western Australia*.

DOLA wishes to provide comment on both the Department's current operations and future strategic directions as they relate to sustainability. Representatives from the areas of land titling and valuation, Crown land administration, and land and spatial information have provided specific comments as has the WALIS Office, currently situated at DOLA.

1. COMMON ACCESS TO LAND INFORMATION

WALIS is a cross-government coordination body devoted to the management of geographic information on a whole of government and community basis. Collectively, WALIS agencies have identified both technology and process issues vital to the management of geographic information.

Geographic information provides a common reference framework, enabling multiple layers of information to be overlaid and employed for decision-making purposes. For example, the utilisation of land ownership data, aerial photography and topographic information may only provide meaningful conclusions when combined.

Recent WALIS initiatives are founded on the ability to retrieve data either by location, keyword or a combination of both. *Interragator*, available on-line or as a stand-alone CD, enables the community to search meta-data relating to specific geographic information sets.

The on-line Western Australian Atlas (www.atlas.wa.gov.au) provides access to tools and data sets relating to land access. WALIS agencies have collectively provided a range of geographic data sets that can be viewed over the Internet via a mapping window. In addition to displaying spatial information, the site provides the opportunity to query associated textual databases accompanying the geographic information.

DOLA proposes to develop an overarching framework to enable those seeking information to acquire it with minimal effort. Ideally, this framework would incorporate a map of Western Australia upon which the user could identify a region and receive information specific to that location. This information remains under the control and management of the authorising agency, the intent of the framework being to simplify the search for information regardless of source.

Principles guiding the integration and management of geographic data are available from WALIS and it is envisaged that the development of DOLA's future data management framework will be influenced by, and will in turn influence, these data management guidelines.

SATELLITE REMOTE SENSING SERVICES

DOLA's Satellite Remote Sensing Services Branch (SRSS) provides remote sensing services and research and development partnerships to assist sustainability in the areas of agriculture, fire management, land and water degradation, and the conservation of natural resources.

DOLA have demonstrated their ability to develop innovative projects for resource management including Vegetation Watch, FireWatch, Land Monitor, AgImage and FOO/PGR (Food on Offer/Pasture Growth rate). SRSS provides technical support and delivery of data to the Land Monitor and Salinity Mapping program for the South West of Western Australia.

DOLA is currently leading a submission to secure Commonwealth funding for a Cooperative Research Centre for Application of Earth Observations (CAEO). If successful in its bid, the CRC will capitalise upon joint venture partnerships between the private sector, State natural resource agencies, CSIRO, Universities and Rural Industry corporations. The CAEO could mobilise resources of \$12 million per year over its seven-year lifespan, providing WA with national leadership in the area of sustainable management of renewable resources.

2. FUTURE DIRECTIONS: *"CONNECTING YOU WITH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LAND"*

DOLA's future developments are driven by new demands on the application of spatial information including:

1. A whole of government approach to the management, integration and application of spatial data to formulate the "big picture";
2. The role of spatial data in the decision making process;
3. Growth of community interest in spatial information; and,
4. Government's increased participation in the commercial development of spatial information and resultant partnerships within the private sector.

Recognising these demands, and their influence on the way in which the Department does business, DOLA has recently developed a business model focusing upon new lines of business and opportunity. This model outlines DOLA's future guiding principles with regard to governing the delivery of land and property information and titling services and epitomises the Department's ongoing dedication towards the delivery of information, products and services which will "connect you with knowledge about land".

DOLA's focus is upon the facilitation and support of a whole of government approach to future planning and development utilising core spatial data sets and emphasises the need for developing and fostering synergies across all aspects of the State. DOLA is in a strong position to forge mutually beneficial and lasting partnerships both within and outside of government departments: partnerships that will result in new and innovative approaches to ensuring the sustainability of the State.

Carbon Rights Legislation and the Registration of Titles

Carbon Rights legislation is being developed which will provide statutory recognition of carbon rights, the registration of those rights through the land titles system, and administrative and accounting procedures for managing the carbon sequestration process. Such a move will impact upon the operations of the State Government in general and DOLA in particular.

Carbon Rights legislation creates a new right in land, registered on the Title and applicable to either Freehold or Crown land. Once the registration of carbon rights have been recorded on the Title these rights are indefeasible under the *Transfer of Land Act*

By providing for the registration of these rights on the Title, DOLA will be instrumental in the implementation of a system that may ultimately attract investment schemes to assist in the reduction of Western Australia's gas emissions, help overcome land degradation, protect biodiversity and promote sustainability.

3. CROWN LAND ADMINISTRATION

The *Land Administration Act 1997 (LAA)* is the State's primary legislation for administering Crown land (approximately 93% of the State). In making decisions with regard to various dispositions (eg. reserves, roads and leases) DOLA is guided by related statutes, policies, and the advice of relevant agencies.

All Crown land dispositions are subject to the requirements of the federal *Native Title Act 1993*. DOLA is involved in consultations and negotiations with Native Title parties and assists in the development of State policies in relation to Native Title.

DOLA manages leases that comprise approximately 40% of the State's total area and directly manages unallocated Crown land and reserves. DOLA has agreements with FESA and Agriculture WA in relation to fire management and weed and vermin control on these lands.

Given that DOLA has substantial responsibilities a range of policies has evolved in relation to Crown land administration. An opportunity exists for a strategic policy to be developed linking the Department's operational policies with State policies on sustainability, thereby guiding delegated decision-makers in determining the appropriate use and dispositions of Crown land.

Rangeland Management

DOLA has been working in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture for thirty years to complete the landscape inventory and condition assessment of WA's pastoral lands. These Rangeland surveys produce comprehensive reports and maps for each regional area describing the inter-relationship of geology, soils, landscape and climate on vegetation.

Rangeland information is employed by Government agencies and private companies to better manage the resources of the land. It forms the critical basis for such systems as WARMS (the WA Rangeland Monitoring System), CAR (comprehensive, adequate and representative) reserve assessment, and contributes to the work of EMU (Environmental Management Unit of the Department of Agriculture). This information is also used to prepare regular pastoral lease reports for the Pastoral Lands Board and forms the basis for valuation assessment, by which the Valuer General's Office sets annual rents.

Pastoral Lands Board

The Pastoral Lands Board is responsible for the administration of 539 pastoral leases throughout the Rangelands, covering an area of 870,000 square kilometres. The functions of the include:

- Ensuring that pastoral leases are managed in an ecologically sustainable manner;
- Developing policies to prevent the degradation of the Rangelands;
- Developing policies to rehabilitate degraded or eroded Rangelands; and,
- Conducting research into any matter it considers relevant to the pastoral industry.

The Board is responsible for ensuring that pastoralists use methods of best pastoral and environmental practice. Further to this, the Board must respond to the requirements set down in various inter-governmental agreements including those on ecological sustainability, the maintenance of bio-diversity and national guidelines for Rangeland management.

Western Australian Collaborative Rangelands Information System

The National Land and Water Audit Rangelands Monitoring Theme is funding the development of the Australian Collaborative Rangelands Information System (ACRIS) in order to implement an effective environmental monitoring, assessment and reporting architecture that will assist in the management of Australian Rangelands.

To implement ACRIS and deliver a national information system, partnership arrangements between key stakeholder agencies in each of the States has been formalised. A State Inter-departmental Working Group, upon which DOLA sits, was established to implement the WA chapter of ACRIS (WACRIS). Currently, this Group is investigating appropriate mechanisms to formalise the implementation of the WACRIS architecture and to support the request for minimal annual funding from the Commonwealth for continuation of ACRIS.

WACRIS aims to improve access to Rangeland information required by stakeholders to meet their individual statutory obligations, and to demonstrate that the provision of a cost-effective mechanism for inter-agency collaboration at both strategic, policy and operational levels. WACRIS will benefit stakeholders in such areas as environmental monitoring and management; sustainable land use and development; and, land administration, management and planning.

Both DOLA and the WALIS Office have provided in principal support for the WACRIS project, which promotes a whole of government approach to the sustainable management of Rangelands.

4. FUNDING TAXATION

Sustainable Development like all forms of development will require Capital Investment. Property taxes provide an ideal way to raise funding for these projects for the following reasons:

1. Difficult to avoid.
2. Generally well targeted in the sense that property ownership and wealth are correlated.
3. Various options are available with:
 - a) Land taxes suited to stimulating the use of under-utilised land.

- b) Rental taxes can capture revenue from high revenue businesses.
- c) Capital value taxes can combine the above two benefits.

Valuation services delivered by DOLA's Valuation Services Division are able to provide the tax bases on which to raise money to deliver investment in sustainable development or tailor the tax to encourage sustainable development.

5. CONCLUSION

Land information and titling functions underpin the government's spatial information resource. DOLA, as the custodian of such information, is a key player in the whole of government approach to the employment and dissemination of information integral to achieving the sustainability of the State.

The development of partnerships between all stakeholders, including the community, academia, industry, Local, State and Commonwealth governments, is vital if the successful management of economic, natural and social resources is to occur in Western Australia.

Whilst Government must take leadership on the issue of sustainability by producing the State Sustainability Strategy, all stakeholders must recognise an obligation to manage information from a wider perspective than just their own and to readily share it with others. Whilst the attainment of 'sustainability' is challenging it also provides the opportunity to foster innovative solutions to many of the problematic issues currently facing the State.

DOLA's current and future initiatives demonstrate that the State's land resources can be managed responsibly. The employment of technologies such as satellite remote sensing and Geographical Information Systems will assist decision makers to better manage and monitor changes to the landscape.

DOLA is adopting a broader focus in the provision of spatial information across government, providing for the widespread and integrated access to land information and employing a range of on-line technologies to facilitate the process of "connecting you with knowledge about land"!

6. CONTACTS

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