

3 April 2002

Professor Peter Newman
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Department of the Premier and Cabinet
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PERTH WA 6000

Dear Professor Newman

STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale is very pleased to hear of the preparation of a State Sustainability Strategy. Leadership from all levels of government, and especially State Government, is crucial at this time given the need to raise the public profile of this agenda. Sustainability is definitely a worthwhile pursuit.

Council considers the use of the concept of 'ecological footprint' as a sound method of explaining to the community how our impact on Earth is growing. Use of environmental indicators (social, economic and environmental) is also being investigated.

Council would like to take this opportunity to discuss some of the opportunities and challenges to moving towards a more sustainable society. We have also attempted to provide answers to some of the questions raised in the Consultation Paper.

Council is committed to sustainability as an outcome and Local Agenda 21 as a way of getting there. The Shire and many other Local Authorities have also been achieving great things outside of the Local Agenda 21 process, and this will no doubt continue.

Local Agenda 21 has reinforced Council's role in:

- (a) VISIONING - working with the community to create a vision and set a direction (how do we want things to be in twenty years, fifty years). This is also good practice regardless of an LA21 process
- (b) LEADERSHIP TO COMMUNITY - making sure that the Council is an example to the community of best practice (it is assumed that the Council recognises sustainability is best practice)
- (c) PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIPS – working with the community wherever possible, and forming partnerships with government and business on strategic projects.
- (d) PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY – significant leaps along the sustainability spectrum will be the result of good forward planning

Local Government has a key role in sustainability planning. Local Agenda 21 is currently the best framework to undertake this work. The preparation of sustainability plans by local government which feed directly into high level plans in the Council (eg Corporate Plan or Strategic Plans) is critical. The skills and resources to undertake this work in Local Governments are not widely available and this is where state government needs to provide help.



Our Council believes the proposed partnership agreement between State Government and the WA Local Government Association is an excellent first step. It is hoped that this agreement will enable local governments to get more out of their sustainability plans and work more productively with State agencies to achieve common objectives.

Council has formed some great partnerships over the past ten years with State Government agencies to achieve natural resource management outcomes. There is no reason that as the sustainability agenda becomes more critical the same cannot occur for energy, water management, social services and other issues.

Partnerships between Local Governments or with Regional Development Commissions will be particularly important for Local Governments wanting to progress towards more sustainable development. This facilitates transfer of knowledge and skills and may provide benefits in terms of economies of scales. An example in the Peel region is the recent call for tenders for waste management services for the Shires of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Murray and Waroona, which allowed for new or improved recycling services for each of the three areas.

Partnerships between Local Government and with other tiers of Government (ie vertical and horizontal integration) are also a key factor in speeding up sustainability. By working with State and Federal Government on common agendas, (e.g. rural drainage, urban stormwater management), there is a greater chance of influencing institutional change, creating opportunities and working through barriers together.

Therefore all levels of government need to set objectives of forming worthwhile partnerships with the other tiers of government to achieve sustainability. Unfortunately, as government agencies set performance objectives for their own operations they do this without proper recognition of the needs and plans of other stakeholders. More often than not, this process of 'removing from others' results in less sustainable on-ground outcomes.

The recognition (or sign-off) of Local Agenda 21 plans by state government might be a good first step. Alternatively, greater involvement of state agencies in the preparation of a local communities LA21 plan could be encouraged.

Legislative recognition of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) is important at all levels of government. A critical requirement at State Government level is the inclusion of ESD principles and considerations in the Town Planning and Development Act. Whilst the current initiative to prepare a Statement of Planning Policy on Environmental and Natural Resource Policy is a positive first step, incorporation of sustainability principles into the Town Planning and Development Act will send a clear message that these considerations are important at the highest level of planning and development law. At the local level, town planning schemes, rural strategies and local planning policies are starting to embrace principles of sustainability. Shire rural strategies (eg Serpentine-Jarrahdale) often contain good examples of how sustainability can be incorporated into existing planning instruments.

Many best practice examples exist of how local authorities are moving towards sustainability. Some examples include:

- Community Landcare Centres – Serpentine-Jarrahdale
- Productive use of drainage water – Dirk Brook Project, Serpentine-Jarrahdale
- Low water use facilities – City of Gosnells Administration building
- Cities for Climate Protection Councils – almost all metropolitan Councils in WA.

However, the key message is that our society needs to take up sustainability faster. The promotion and marketing of this agenda to the wider community is essential in helping bring about faster uptake. This promotion should be done as a joint venture of all tiers of government, with the leadership of State Government.



The involvement of business to achieving sustainability is essential. Apart from the leading businesses, most will be looking for the right signs and signals from government. Councils are grappling with this challenge (for example in the setting of energy performance standards for new housing) but are reliant upon the support of State and Federal Government.

Finally, I would draw your attention to the current work of Environment Australia which is attempting to develop an improved framework for Local Government Sustainability Planning.

I hope the above is of use, and we look forward to the release of the draft Sustainability Strategy.

Please do not hesitate to call the undersigned should you require any clarification of the points raised above.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Del Marco
ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

