

## Focus on the Future

### The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy Consultation Draft

Comments by **Barbara Hardy AO, South Australia**

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This is an excellent document, and points the way to an encouraging future for Western Australia. I am very impressed with the obvious, and large amount of work that has been done in preparing the Draft Strategy.

It is very thought-provoking, and will warrant very careful consideration when striving to achieve successful implementation. The **six overall Goals for the Western Australia Government**, the **seven Foundation Principles**, plus the **four Process Principles** will hopefully set the scene in political and bureaucratic minds so that implementation will be relatively straightforward and not too difficult. The **42 Priority Areas for Action** will be very helpful in this regard.

I am sure that most of the community will be very supportive, particularly in view of the fact that the concept of sustainability is much better understood and accepted nowadays. The work that has been done during the Decade of Landcare, and since then, will have been a great help in creating this understanding. I think that most of us realize the great need to 'amend' our lifestyle and activities in order to ensure that our precious Planet Earth will be able to sustain its natural resources, ecosystems, and all living species.

The **Sustainability Visions** match up well with the **Goals of the Government**, and the **forty-two Priority Areas for Action** will provide contexts for that action – and that is when the hard work will need to start – in fact in some cases has already started. I like the way the Priority Areas for Action are set out: "In short, Objectives, Actions already include, Proposed actions, Indicators and targets, Global opportunities, and Further reading".

However, I have not had time to read every word of the Draft Strategy, so please forgive me if my comments are brief and a little disjointed.

I was impressed with the fact that **15 seminars** had taken place given by greatly respected presenters, including some from overseas. The **44 Case Studies** had been carried out by students – it was very good to get young people thoroughly involved, especially in view of the fact that they will be living in this hopefully sustainable State in years to come.

The **Background papers** prepared principally by academics interestingly included some of an ethical and religious nature. I have just read the most recent Worldwatch Paper No.164, "Invoking the Spirit – Religion and spirituality in the quest for a sustainable world" written by Gary Gardner 2002. It is very relevant to today's world, and very helpful about spreading the conservation message through religious networks.

I was pleased to see **Local Government** mentioned a lot, and the inclusion of **indigenous communities**. However, I thought that business could perhaps have been given a higher priority, in view of the fact that **business** is principally development-oriented and almost always has considerable impact on the environment, both positive and negative.

**Sustainability assessments, and action plans**, are a good idea in that they have a broader concept than environmental impact assessments i.e. social and economic as well as environmental.

### Specific Comment

**p.11:** discussion on **Greenhouse** is very good, especially with the reference to **oil vulnerability, a gas transition stage and a hydrogen economy**. This appears in several other places within the document, and, I believe, is tremendously important – as is the mention of **perverse subsidies with respect to fossil fuels** in the ?quote elsewhere from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

The mention of **new industries in Sustainable Agriculture**, and **ending logging**, with more emphasis on **plantations**, all were encouraging.

**p.12: Certification of eco-tourism** is very important, especially in relations to the magnificent Kimberleys region.

The trial project **“Reviving the Suburbs”** looks good, as does the commitment to **“double the metropolitan rail system”**, and the **‘Bike Plan’** mentioned elsewhere.

**p.13:** Under **“Water”** hopefully there will be considerable work done on **groundwater**.

**p.14:** Under **“Sustainability and business”** I was pleased to see mention of **“socially responsible investment”**; then a section on **“Eco-efficiency and industrial ecology”**, and a section on **“Covenants”** suggesting the use of **‘sustainability covenants’** – both highly desirable.

**p.73: I nominate Prof. Peter Newman for the inaugural Sustainability Award.**

**p.79:** under ‘Further reading’ could be listed **“Eco-Economy – Building an economy for the Earth”** by Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute, 2001.

**pp.90-91:** I was delighted to see work on and plans for the **gas transition and a hydrogen economy**

**pp.154-156:** very good work planned for **‘sustainable energy’**. I have had some contact recently with, and have some publications of TERI, the Tata Energy and Resources Institute, of New Delhi in India, the Director of which is Dr Rajendra Pachauri, who is now also the Director of the IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change. Perhaps some of TERI’s work could be of interest in WA’s renewable energy programme.

**p.206, “Industrial Ecology”:** there is a very good paper written by Hardin Tibbs titled **“Industrial Ecology – An Environmental Agenda for Industry”** and published by the Global Business Network in 1993, which perhaps could be listed.

**pp.209-213:** This **“Implementation”** section is tremendously important.

**pp.223-234:** It is encouraging, and re-assuring to see the **List of Proposed Actions”** right at the end of this excellent publication.

### Some minor corrections and ‘typos’

**p.8**, para 2, 2<sup>nd</sup>. sentence: does not seem to make sense – is there a word missing between ‘action’ and ‘the’?

**p.10**: para headed “Information and Excellence”, 3<sup>rd</sup> line: delete one of the 2 ‘the’s’;  
5<sup>th</sup> line: correct the spelling of ‘sustainability’.

**p.42**: in “Institutional Change”, 2<sup>nd</sup> line: I would like to see “....social, environmental *and* economic decisions.” rather than ‘or’.

**p.43**: in “Actions underway include” 5<sup>th</sup> dot point, 2<sup>nd</sup> line: “its”, should be “their”

**p.56** Figure 3, “Sustainable Settlements”....SPP3.2...rather than saying “Planning for Aboriginal Communities” it should be “.....with Aboriginal Communities.

**p.59**, Box 11: World Wildlife Fund is now known in Australia as World Wide Fund for Nature.

**p.196**, Box 41, Key 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> line: the word ‘good’ needs an ‘s’ i.e. ‘goods’.

### Finally:

It is indeed a very complete strategy, and it is excellent! I don’t think I can track down any omissions, or dubious statements, and it has raised many thoughts in my head (and many other heads, I am sure) for striving to achieve sustainability of our Earth in a very practical way. Western Australia will be a ‘perfect State’ if all this can happen.

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