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Professor Peter Newman
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Dear Peter,

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT STATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The Kimberley Development Commission Board has reviewed the Draft Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy and has identified a number of fundamental issues that it believes must be addressed if the final strategy is to value add to the wide range of current policies and plans to ensure achievable and measurable outcomes.

The Draft State Sustainability Strategy has been prepared with substantial influence of academic institutions. Whilst the use of these institutions is applauded, the consultation process which was carried out in December 2002 was the first opportunity for the document and more importantly, its implications to be considered within the organisations or institutions that may be required to implement a final policy. The Commission considers that it is highly likely that there will need to be considerably more discussion and debate before the broad concepts that it contains are able to be effectively incorporated into the practical actions of Government. With this in mind a number of specific issues should be addressed.

- It should be recognised within the strategy that the notion of “sustainability” is progressively being broadly embraced globally and it is therefore variously contained in many regional strategies and policies implemented by state government, local government and non government organisations. It is important that this developing work is recognised and incorporated into a statewide approach to prevent duplication and also to ensure local ownership within regional communities.
- The proposed actions that have been identified within the draft strategy could have the potential to value add to current activities however they will require the identification of responsible agencies, resources and timeframes for their implementation.

More specific concerns that have been identified with respect to content are:

- The lack of mention of the impacts and necessary strategies to manage fire. This is an especially important issue for the Kimberley as the impacts of fire management is now emerging as regionally significant.
- The absence of strategies targeting the negative impacts on communities and the associated effect on their sustainability caused by significant royalties and benefits being exported out of the regions specifically from the Resources Sector.

The strategy is based on promotion of the 'triple bottom line' approach to sustainability involving the balance of economic, social and environmental criteria. This approach is supported. Whilst many of the agencies of Government and private sector groups tend to work on economic, social or environmental initiatives in isolation, the work, projects and method of operation of this and other Development Commissions already and inherently balances 'triple bottom line' influences in the region and more broadly. Specifically, the facilitating role of Development Commissions in bringing government departments and non government organisations together to develop and resource regional projects should be recognised as an important part of the promotion of sustainability in regions and therefore collectively throughout the state.

The draft contains a suggestion that all regions prepare "Regional Sustainability Strategies". For such strategies to be effective in creating an enhanced 'triple bottom line' approach to development, methodologies must be developed and agreed within local communities. The development of these methodologies should be conducted in partnership with both implementing agencies and communities. The complexity of these processes should not be underestimated. This work will be time consuming and probably involve using resources beyond the scope of the Commission's current budget. As in other activities recommended by the Plan resources have not been allocated to this activity, and in the current environment seem unlikely to be available.

We hope that our recommendations are fully considered in the next step of developing a final State Sustainability Strategy, and the Commission looks forward to further involvement.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Gooding
Chief Executive

4th March 2003