

SWAN RIVER TRUST

Professor Peter Newman
Sustainability Policy Unit
Department of Premier and Cabinet
15th floor Governor Sterling Tower
197 St George's Tce
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Professor Newman,

Thank you for the opportunity to "Focus on Future – the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy."

The Swan River Trust is responsible for ensuring a healthy functional river environment while considering the range of aspirations for use of the river. This is similar to the challenge for the State Sustainability Strategy, so it is an initiative we have a strong interest in.

We also believe our experience in:

1. Protecting a specific regional environment asset that is also a resource of immense social value;
2. Assessing land use planning applications along the river that are necessarily combined environmental assessments;
3. Implementing community based river management programs; and
4. Recent recommendations from the Machinery of Government review of the Swan River Trust that will provide the highest level of transparency and community consultation in carrying out the Trust's statutory processes;

enables us to contribute significant learnings from our own experience on some of the suggestions in the Strategy. We are keen to participate in the next steps in developing the Strategy and we would be interested to explore opportunities to trial approaches in the Swan-Canning catchment.

The Trust confirms its strongest support for developing the draft strategy. In particular, the focus on partnership approaches, the development of sustainability strategies at the regional scale and focus on 'sense of place' are all recommendations that match with the Trust's experience on how to sustainably care for our environment.

In our experience, the success of partnerships with community and local government has been dependent on being able to provide sufficient resources, legislative backing and agency support to make these partnerships work. Ongoing resourcing and implementation systems will be essential to the success of partnerships.

Another key factor will be further debate on what needs to change to achieve sustainability. In some cases very significant changes could be needed. As well as defining targets, important steps in this process will be improving community knowledge on sustainability matters and agreeing on values that are needed to develop a commitment to sustainability.

We have however, provided some specific comments on the Strategy in the two attachments. These are divided into comments on the strategy and specific matters of interest to the Trust.

We also believe, there are three specific initiatives underway in the Trust – The Swan-Canning Cleanup Program; the Swan-Canning Rivers Precinct Policy Planning Project and the Riverbank Program, that can contribute greatly to exploration of sustainability. I have attached relevant brochures and provided some brief comments on each below. We would be keen to discuss these in some detail with you and explore opportunities to consider these as case studies.

The Swan-Canning Cleanup Program Action Plan (SCCP)

SCCP is a program working across the community throughout the catchment to reduce nutrients in the Swan-Canning estuary in order to reduce the occurrence of algal blooms. It involves a comprehensive, integrated program, focussed on areas of greatest return for investment. A consistent legislative framework is being developed across all of government and co-ordinated through the Environmental Protection Act 1986. SCCP works collaboratively with community, industry, Local Government, Regional Government and numerous State agencies. We have sought to ensure the program is recognised as a partnership between all of these groups rather than solely the domain of the Trust.

SCCP works at the regional catchment scale which appears to be the organisational unit that is seen as having a key role in the State Sustainability Strategy. One of the great opportunities for SCCP now is to align with the Swan Catchment Council's Swan Region Strategy. The regional strategy has potential to guide investment across a broad range of environmental values. It does not seem an impossible step for the Regional NRM strategies to become Regional Sustainability Strategies.

In implementing SCCP, our greatest challenge is engaging all of the population. We believe we have successfully engaged a sector of the community with a specific interest in the environment and have made good steps in extending the message throughout the wider community through community development programs leading to long term behaviour change. We have done this by implementing a dedicated cross-media public awareness, development and involvement campaign. This provides environmental education and participation opportunities to specific target audiences within the community at large. However, there are still great possibilities in mobilising the remainder of the community. This is a necessary step as reducing nutrient loads requires a contribution from everyone. This challenge will be a significant issue for implementing the State Sustainability Strategy also.

Swan-Canning Rivers Precinct Policy Planning Project

This considers the river landscape in environmental management units and aims to define a plan for each that incorporates environmental, social and cultural values. It appears to be closely aligned with the Sustainability Strategy's intent of emphasising 'a sense of place.' It has also been developed collaboratively with Department for Planning and Infrastructure. Its implementation will be through Local Government but with financial and technical support from the State agencies.

Riverbank

Riverbank is another collaborative project which provides matching funding to Local governments to undertake restoration projects along their section of the Swan-Canning shoreline. Again development of projects must consider community aspirations for the area, environmental processes and environmental values.

I look forward to discussing the Trust's submission in more detail with the Sustainability Policy Unit.

Yours sincerely

Darryl Miller
A/MANAGER, SWAN RIVER TRUST

28 February 2003

Attachment 1. Further Comments on the Strategy

Principles, Visions and goals.

All foundation and process principles, visions and goals are supported. Of course, it is essential that specific performance measures for each are developed, as interpretation of the text is dependent on individuals' values.

Prioritisation of Actions

Sustainability requires a recognition of the complexity of systems, the range of stakeholders with specific needs and so there are necessarily many specific actions. The strategy clearly has given a good deal of thought to how to organise the actions in a way that recognises all of these requirements. It is suggested that in the final strategy, a system for further organising the actions is needed. The system should also be a hierarchical system to isolate the most crucial action areas. It may be possible to isolate general actions for actions that are specific to one sector.

One suggestion for Trust staff is that the actions proposed for each goal are relatively similar, perhaps actions could be grouped systematically, using headings such as below.

- Defining sustainability / target setting
- Education and empowerment
- Forming partnerships
- Institutional arrangements
- Governance
- Implementation/process management

Then actions could be presented in a matrix as follows.

Action	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6
Defining sustainability/ Target setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action 1• Action 2• etc					
Education and empowerment						
Forming partnerships						
Institutional arrangements						
Governance						
Implementation /process management						

Setting targets

It is understood this step is still to happen, but we emphasise its importance and also the importance of community debate in agreeing to targets. As discussed, in

some cases a significant change in both community values and management approaches could be needed.

Progress toward targets is an issue we have also grappled with in implementing SCCP. In this case we have set both short term and long-term targets for water quality in the system. The short-term targets provide guideposts that delineate the path toward a healthier river system.

Assigning responsibilities

Along with setting measurable targets an important step in ensuring implementation will be in identifying roles and responsibilities for carrying out the actions.

Attachment 2. Areas of interest and implications for the Trust

The Trust has a role to play in many areas of the Strategy. Some specific areas, that are discussed in the consultation document that the Trust flags its specific interests in, and requests recognition for, are:

- Partnership for action (including participation in the State-Local Government Roundtable on sustainability)
- Planning for sustainability
- Sustainability in regions
- Indigenous communities in regions
- Maintaining our biodiversity
- Protecting aquatic systems
- Preserving cultural heritage and landscapes and creating 'sense of place'.
- Community services and development
- Education and community awareness for sustainability
- Eco-efficiency and industrial ecology