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To Whom It May Concern:

OVERVIEW

The Swan Catchment Council congratulates the Government of Western Australia for the foresight in producing a strategy to attempt to assure the sustainability of the state.

The natural resource regions of Western Australia fully appreciate the difficulty of producing a strategy which will attempt to change the way Western Australians view the environment in which they live.

There is no one involved in Natural Resource Management who would argue that sustainability is not our core function so it is very hard to criticize a document that sets out its purpose for existence as a State Sustainability Strategy. However, the very grandiose nature of the document sets it up to fail. It tries to address all issues and by the nature of trying to address everything does not address the nature of people.

In the Swan Region we wish to make comment on the following areas.

1. Scope of the document
2. Education and implementation
3. Adoption by the community – lack of acknowledgement of volunteers in areas other than CALM and rural landcare.

1. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

By attempting to cover holistically the whole range of issues of sustainable living the document fails to inspire. The document could be improved by a very strict edit so that it becomes readable. It is very obvious that different sections have been written by different individuals and there are several contradictory statements.

Much of the background reading in the “sense of place” neglects to consider those many community members who already have a very refined sense of the area in which they live and work.. In saying this we do not reject the concept as a very workable regime.

By covering so many issues, natural resource management and protection issues of interest to the Swan Catchment Council have tended to become less important which is of concern. Without protection of the natural environment there will be no sustainable living.

The Swan Catchment Council covers the metropolitan region and recognizes that there is a requirement for food, shelter and income for the human animal. Our overview as a Natural Resource Management Region draws us to comment that the rate of growth of the metropolitan area is possibly unsustainable given the water resources of the region. We do recognize that there is a large underground resource but in the absence of long term scientific research into the sustainability of the resource we must urge caution and this does not seem to be addressed in the document.

The sustainability of the rivers and wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain given urban expansion has been touched on but not explored and this leads to the biggest frustration of the document – the inability to see if enough research has been considered to draw the conclusions.

There is also a serious lack of recognition of the NRM regions – these regions have the great responsibility of preparing a regional Natural Resource Management Strategy on behalf of their community for adoption by the State and Federal Governments.

2. Education and implementation

If the government wants to implement this document it must seriously consider the requirement for substantial resources for an education campaign. If this document is to be adopted by the community each person must be required to change the way in which they live. This will not happen without education.

To seriously consider that the change will occur by “facilitation through the arts” is living in fantasy land.

3. Adoption by the Community

As noted above that only way to achieve the outcomes of this document is by education.

There is a serious lack of understanding by the authors of this document of the role played by community volunteers in implementation of any government program. The community is willing to help but almost all the actions to be carried out to implement this strategy will have to be carried by volunteers. This puts enormous pressure on already stretched community people.

When the proposal to produce a State Sustainability Strategy was considered, the community involved in natural resource management across Western Australia were pleased. It is sad that this document does not reach the ideals as expected.

Yours sincerely

Sue Metcalf
CHAIRPERSON