Professor Peter Newman
Director
Sustainability Policy Unit
Department of Premier and Cabinet
15th Floor, Governor Stirling Tower
197 St Georges Tce
Perth WA 6000

28 February 2003

Dear Peter

The WA Collaboration Submission to State Sustainability Strategy

The WA Collaboration would like to congratulate the Western Australian Government on taking this bold step towards creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

Attached to this letter is the *Community Sustainability Agenda*, a document which has been created through the many discussions facilitated by the WA Collaboration between September 2002 and February 2003.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* is the WA Collaboration's first step in identifying a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainability in Western Australia across social, environmental, indigenous and economic perspectives of the community and non-government sector.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* outlines the WA Collaboration's priority recommendations for creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia. Outlined below are comments that relate more specifically to the draft State Sustainability Strategy.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Focus of strategy on detailed peripheral programs

The State Sustainability Strategy, with 250 recommendations is a very detailed and comprehensive document. Unfortunately, much of the detail in the recommendations is on peripheral programs, which whilst are all undoubtedly 'part of sustainability', can tend to take focus away from the core institutional issues that will drive sustainability into the future.

And indeed, the draft State Sustainability Strategy is currently weaker on the core issues of Sustainability Assessment, Institutional Reform for sustainability and Regional Sustainability. Each of these issues are addressed in some detail in the *Community Sustainability Agenda*.

Overall lack of focus on social sustainability

In general the draft State Sustainability Strategy, whilst acknowledging the importance of social sustainability, still focuses primarily on the interaction between environment & economy. One example is the lack of any mention of poverty or social inequality, core social sustainability issues.

General lack of awareness of the State Sustainability Strategy

Through the regional workshops facilitated by the WA Collaboration, through the regional workshops, found that while the people who attended the workshops had a good general understanding of the concept of sustainability, they generally did not relate or identify with the State Sustainability Strategy, and felt that much more broad community debate, discussion and deliberation needed to happen around the issue of sustainability.

The WA Collaboration does not feel that the State Government has undertaken the necessary promotion, engagement of involvement of the wider community that will be necessary for the State Sustainability Strategy to be a success in the long term. This is despite a Principle of Sustainability stating that: "….public engagement lies at the heart of all sustainability principles."

The first step in developing a State Sustainability Strategy that would have ownership in the wider community should have been to undertake an extensive series of discussions and conversations about the vision for a just and sustainable future for Western Australia, and the possible steps to take.

Lack of integration of the State Sustainability Strategy with other government policy

Currently, there are many significant policy development processes being undertaken by the Western Australian Government, including the State Strategic Plan, the Greenhouse Strategy, the Regional Development Policy.

The way in which all of these major, whole of government policy processes link together is not clear, and should be made far more explicit.

Resourcing and Responsibility

  The real test of the State Government's commitment to sustainability will be the resources it allocates to implementing sustainability. The WA Collaboration understands that the next step in finalising the State Sustainability Strategy will be the allocation of resources, timelines and responsibilities to the Strategy, and looks forward to seeing this.

Indicators and Targets

The indicators and targets included in the Sustainability Strategy are generally indicators for the implementation of the Strategy itself, and are not adequate for

The value of Sustainability Indicators, which measure the overall well-being of society, is well established elsewhere, and the WA Collaboration urges the Western Australian Government to at least developing state-wide headline sustainability indicators.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

The specific comments outlined below relate primarily to two key chapters of the draft Sustainability Strategy, the Sustainability Framework and Sustainability and Governance chapters. While other areas in the draft Sustainability Strategy are obviously crucial, the WA Collaboration considers the Framework and Governance sections to be of the highest priority in establishing appropriate structures and processes to drive sustainability into the future.

Chapter 2 – Sustainability Framework

While the principles, visions and goals of the Sustainability Framework are commendable, the process for creating this framework would have ideally being a long term participatory process to develop a **shared** vision across Western Australia about what a just and sustainable future for Western Australia looks like.

The Tasmania Together process is one example of where such a process was undertaken.

Chapter 3 – Sustainability & Governance

Sustainability Assessment

The WA Collaboration has some concerns with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure being responsible for Social Assessment.

Institutional Change

While this section is called Institutional Change, there is actually little institutional change contained in the recommendations. This is a ***critical aspect of any Sustainability Strategy*** – putting into place the institutions and structures that will drive sustainability into the future.

The WA Collaboration recommendations on institutional change for sustainability are outlined in Section XXXX of the Community Sustainability Agenda.

Embracing Sustainability in Government Agencies

1.5   As outlined in the Community Sustainability Agenda, the WA Collaboration would like to see an immediate review of all relevant legislation. Sustainability should be given the same priority as was competition in the legislative review undertaken for the National Competition Policy process.

1.6 & 1.7 The Codes of Practice and Action Plan's for Government agencies are a positive step, but as currently outlined in the draft Strategy are very focused on environmental management. More consultation with relevant Government departments and groups such as the WA Collaboration and WACOSS, should be undertaken to ensure that aspects of social sustainability are being incorporated.

Regional Sustainability

1.16   The WA Collaboration queries whether developing Regional Strategies immediately is appropriate, without determining who will have ultimate responsibility for these Strategies and whether there will be adequate funding for their development and implementation.

As outlined in the Community Sustainability Agenda, the WA Collaboration feels that there should be a 'stepping stone' towards developing full Regional Strategies, by forming Regional Forums or Roundtables to start the process of regional collaboration.

The WA Collaboration is also extremely concerned at the sole focus of the social aspects of Regional Sustainability Strategies being 'story telling'. While story-telling

undoubtedly has a role to play, it cannot and should not be the only mechanism for bringing social sustainability into a Regional context. Even the Background Paper for Regional Sustainability, which strongly puts the case for narrative research and story-telling in the context of Regional Sustainability, notes that:

> *It is unrealistic to base the development of regional sustainability strategies on narrative research alone. Publishing a document for each region in Western Australia that tells the personal stories and histories of a diverse range of regional stakeholders would, however, be a good start to understanding regional sustainability dynamics, and the potential conflicts that may arise when creating a sustainable strategy for the future. (page 13)*

> *Narrative research is only one form of place research that could be used in the development of regional sustainability strategies. (page 14)*

1.17   As outlined in the Community Sustainability Agenda [include part on Regional Development Commissions]

Indigenous Communities & Sustainability

More consultation/participation with indigenous communities – are more strategies really what is required??

CONCLUSION

Community Sustainability Agenda:

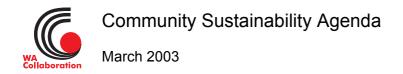## Creating a just and sustainable Western Australia

March 2003

The WA Collaboration is funded by

Community Sustainability Agenda:

Creating a just and sustainable Western Australia

James Duggie and Nicole Hodgson, WA Collaboration

The Founding Organisations of the

WA Collaboration are:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission

Council of Churches of WA

Ethnic Communities Council of WA

Environmental Alliance

Unions WA

WA Council of Social Service

WA Sustainable Industry Group

Contact Details
WA Collaboration
Lotteries House, 2 Delhi St
West Perth WA 6005
Ph: 9420 7295
Fax: 9420 7273
Email: nicole.hodgson@conservationwa.asn.au

network, it is not in a position to endorse all the outcomes of the process such as the specific recommendations of this document. Specific statements in this document also may not represent the opinions of some members of the organisations represented on the Steering Committee of the WA Collaboration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Background to the WA Collaboration

Achieving sustainability is one of the major challenges for the twenty-first century. The WA Collaboration is an historic partnership of organisations committed to a just and sustainable Western Australia. The groups involved cover a range of perspectives of the non-government sector that have recognised the opportunities for positive social, environmental and economic reforms within the sustainability agenda.

Collectively, the groups on the Steering Committee represent thousands of organisations, community groups and organisations and individuals currently working towards a just and sustainable Western Australia.

Further information on the WA Collaboration can be found at www.wacollaboration.org.au

Creating the Community Sustainability Agenda

In late 2002 and early 2003, the WA Collaboration ran ten workshops throughout Western Australia, between Albany and Kununurra, with the aim of increasing discussion in the community about sustainability and considering the implications of the draft State Sustainability Strategy. Almost 200 participants — primarily community members or representatives of local non-government organisations — took part. Reports from each of the workshops are online at www.wacollaboration.org.au.

The combined outcomes of the regional workshops were drawn together in the draft *Community Sustainability Agenda* which was sent to participants as a background paper to the Sustainability Summit.

The Sustainability Summit was held on 14—15 February 2003, and brought together almost 200 participants from community and non-government organisations, Local and State Government and the private sector, to discuss how to create a just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

In total, around 350 individuals took part in the discussions that led to the creation of this document.

Working Definition of Sustainability

The most widely accepted definition of sustainability was provided by the United Nations sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development Report, *Our Common Future*.

> Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.[1]

Other definitions of sustainability often refer to the integration of the 'triple bottom line', that is, social equity, environmental protection and economic prosperity.

There is a healthy debate surrounding the numerous definitions of sustainability. The WA Collaboration has adopted the above definition as a working definition for the purposes of this document, while noting that in some ways the precise definition is not as important as the processes for pursuing sustainability.

Purpose and Scope of the Community Sustainability Agenda

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of all issues related to sustainability, or to reflect **all** the sustainability issues of interest to all WA Collaboration participants. Rather it reflects an integrated approach to sustainability which is built on the common ground of stakeholders across the non-government sector.

The focus of the *Community Sustainability Agenda* is on the **enabling** programs, policies, institutional arrangements and individual and group efforts that will drive the reorientation of Western Australia towards a genuinely sustainable future, rather than a consideration of all the detailed issues of sustainability. With the appropriate structures and processes in place, the complexity and detail of the sustainability agenda can be dealt with into the future.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* represents a list of high priority recommendations for pursuing the sustainability agenda in Western Australia. The recommendations are focused on State Government-led action to implement the sustainability agenda in Western Australia, and will be submitted to the State Government as part of the State Sustainability Strategy consultation process.

Structure of this Document

This document is organised in twelve main sections, which map the full range of the fundamental dimensions of sustainability and cover other major themes that have emerged from the WA Collaboration discussions.

Sections 1 to 6 are collectively referred to here as the 'Fundamental Dimensions to Sustainability' and explore core aspects of sustainability. Sections 7 to 11 are broad categories of sustainability issues for which all the dimensions of sustainability need

---

[1] World Commission on Environment and Development (1990) *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*, Commission for the Future Australian Edition, Oxford University Press Australia, Melbourne.

to be integrated, and are collectively referred to as 'Cross-dimensional Topics'. The final section briefly outlines the intended future directions for the WA Collaboration.

The structure used in this document was chosen to present in a clear way the range of high priority sustainability issues discussed through the WA Collaboration process. It is acknowledged that other structures and topic headings could have been used.

The path towards sustainability will include transcending the traditional ways of dividing up our understanding of the world into separate disciplines and categories, and finding more holistic ways of thinking about the world and the challenges we face.

The Challenge of Integration

The WA Collaboration believes that sustainability can only be achieved if the key societal goals from each of the fundamental dimensions of sustainability can be achieved at the same time. Thus the goals from all dimensions need to be agreed on, given equal attention and integrated appropriately in a true sustainability agenda.

The various non-government groups represented by the WA Collaboration have in the past focussed primarily on the goals of sustainability that most directly related to their work and interests, that is, either the social, environmental or economic dimensions.

The intention of the WA Collaboration is to encourage and stimulate discussions across these dimensions, including how they interact and how their respective goals can best be integrated.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

All the recommendations contained in this document are summarised in this section. For full details on each recommendation, please see the body of the document.

Recommendation 1   Foster broad dialogue throughout the community on sustainability as part of an innovative communications program

The idea of sustainability is not a familiar one for many people throughout Western Australia. Therefore, any 're-orientation towards sustainability' must include an effective and innovative communications program to provide information as well as to broaden the current conception of sustainability to one that reflects the diversity of peoples, perspectives and interests in Western Australia.

An innovative communications program, which looks beyond standard communications methods such as pamphlets, websites and written information, would be an important precursor to a genuinely participatory approach to future planning for sustainability.

Recommendation 2   Support community action for sustainability

There are already a large number of community groups and non-government or not-for-profit organisations undertaking substantial work towards a just and sustainable future for Western Australia. This work of the community and NGO sector should be supported through a range of measures, including secure funding, capacity building and recognition of the work of the voluntary sector.

Recommendation 3   Genuine participation in Western Australia

The WA Collaboration is committed to a genuinely participatory approach to sustainability in Western Australia. The WA Collaboration recognises that the State Government has gone some way towards recognising the fundamental importance of the interaction between government and its citizens through the work of the Citizens and Civics Unit, and other initiatives such as the Statement of Commitment signed with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and peak Aboriginal bodies.

State and Local Government agencies should:

- incorporate into their policy and procedure manuals a concrete method for consultation and participation that incorporates a 'whole of government' approach;

- ensure that appropriate budgetary allocations are made to implement best practice community engagement, as outlined in the Consulting Citizens Guide, and report annually on progress; and

- ensure that any future implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy, particularly at the regional level, is based on best practice community engagement processes.

Recommendation 4   Incorporate consideration of ethics

In recognition of the importance of ethics in public policy and community decision-making, consideration of relevant ethical values and implications should be incorporated into all public policy consultation processes and policy documents.

Recommendation 5   Interim Social Impact Assessment process

As an interim measure towards a comprehensive Social Impact Assessment process which would feed into a Sustainability Assessment structure, all State budget revenue proposals should be subject to a social impact assessment to ascertain whether separately or cumulatively they impact unfairly on low-income families and individuals, particularly those experiencing multiple layers of disadvantage as a consequence of gender, disability or ethnicity.

As a guide, rises in taxes and charges should be kept at or below the Consumer Price Index for low income families and individuals. All State budget revenue proposals should be subsequently modified if they can be shown to disadvantage this target group.

Recommendation 6   Address unemployment

There are a number of specific measures which State Government departments

and agencies can take to address unemployment, particularly localised unemployment.

- Capital works projects funded by the State Government should include provision for targeting the long-term unemployed and those otherwise disadvantaged in the labour market as a proportion of the workforce, and this requirement should be specified in project tender documents.

- 'Reasonable hours' legislation in state awards should be enforced.

- State Government employees should be encouraged to job share and take part-time work arrangements.

- Specific industry development programs should be implemented in the employment-intensive areas of health and community services and environmental protection and repair, so that job generation also meets social and environmental needs.

Recommendation 7   A 'Thriving Communities Pilot Program'

The State Government should develop a 'Thriving Communities Pilot Program' which focuses on the prevention of local social and environmental problems through collaborative partnerships between government, community organisations and local people.

These pilots are to be situated in a mixture of metropolitan and regional high need areas. Community development funds would be made available in the first instance to pilot regions to facilitate collaboration between government and community services. Local networks will integrate the wide range of pre-existing local structures to develop a responsive local network that focuses on outcomes for the community.

These networks should become the vehicle to implement government priority social and environmental initiatives. These networks could then feed into regional approaches to sustainability (see Recommendation 35).

Recommendation 8   Address poverty and disadvantage

To assist Western Australians in poverty, the State Government should fund:

- A 'Financial Advice Hotline' similar to those operating in other Australian States to provide Western Australians with detailed financial advice. This cost effective strategy will allow regional, rural and remote people to access financial advice and will decrease demand on financial counselling services.

- Fund community education projects that encourage community awareness of poverty and sustainable living and provide general education on issues of credit and debt.

- Fund programs for assisting disadvantaged children to get into school and remain there, with financial support to assist with school fees, books and so on.

Recommendation 9   Disability funding

A significant number of people with disabilities and their families are in critical circumstances and urgently require services such as accommodation, respite and alternatives to employment. These crises are real and reflect poorly on our community.

The State Government should provide adequate funding to ensure that people with disabilities and their families have the opportunities to participate in the life of the community and have a quality of life that reflects the standards set out in the *Disabilities Services Act 1993 (WA)*.

Recommendation 10   Recognise cultural, linguistic and religious diversity

All social policy and programs should be approached with acknowledgement and respect for Western Australia's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. The provision and funding of government services should reflect this approach.

Recommendation 11   Resource use and sustainable consumption

The State Government should establish a program to monitor the important parameters of Western Australia's resource use and consumption patterns and related environmental and social impacts.

Ambitious, but achievable targets for reducing Western Australia's per capita ecological footprint should be adopted. Strategies for achieving these targets will then need to be developed and implemented. These strategies should not place a disproportionate burden on rural, regional or remote communities.

Recommendation 12   Greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments

The State Government should commit to ensuring Western Australia makes its proportional contribution to enable Australia to meet its Kyoto Protocol Targets for greenhouse gas emissions. This should include completing, funding and implementing a comprehensive State Greenhouse Strategy. The State Government should also urge the Australian Commonwealth Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

In order to achieve this, future developments of the Western Australian economy should not be skewed towards energy intensive industries. Equal policy priority should be given to less greenhouse intense, economic growth sectors, such as the services sector of our economy.

Recommendation 13   Fund environmental management agencies and programs

The level of funding currently provided to State Government environmental agencies is inadequate to meet their legislative responsibilities and to implement their wide range of environmentally related strategies, policies and programs.

This has major impacts on public health, on lower socio-economic groups and on environmental degradation.

The State Government should substantially increase state budget allocations to State Government environmental agencies, in order to reverse the decline in funding to these agencies, and allow them to fulfil their legislative responsibilities.

Recommendation 14   Joint management of National Parks and Conservation Reserves

The State Government should expedite the identification and development of joint management programs for National Parks with traditional owners, based on sustainability criteria and opportunities for economic development for Aboriginal people. This would include the allocation of adequate resources to enable joint management regimes to be effective.

Recommendation 15   Support sustainability through economic means

A large scale inquiry should be undertaken to advise the State Government on how to support the sustainability agenda through economic policies, mechanisms and instruments. The inquiry would identify best practice, investigate appropriate models for community economic development and identify government subsidies that act as incentives and disincentives for sustainability.

The proposed Sustainability Commission should co-ordinate or commission this inquiry.

Recommendation 16   Radical increase in resource use efficiency

The State Government should adopt achievable but ambitious targets for a radical increase in the efficiency with which Western Australia uses its resources. In other words, 'do more with less'. The WA Collaboration supports the adoption of the recommendations in the draft State Sustainability Strategy to:

- increase resource efficiency (referred to as Eco-efficiency) by four times the current levels; and

- reduce the total impact of the Western Australian society on the environment by half, as measured by the ecological footprint model (see Section 4. Environmental Sustainability: Objectives and Constraints).

Recommendation 17   Business and community interaction

Business should continue to develop, establish and improve partnerships with the community. This should be based on a willingness to listen to community pressure, a commitment to community participation in areas of key concern to the community, an approach to resource use that better meets the ongoing economic needs of regional centres and remote communities, and investment in strategies that build the capacity of individuals and communities to improve their governance institutions and practices.

Recommendation 18   WA Indigenous Economic Strategy

The State Government should allocate sufficient funds to ensure the implementation of the WA Indigenous Economic Strategy which is being developed with ATSIC, state agencies and other key stakeholders.
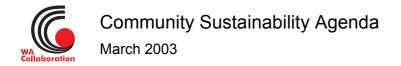
Recommendation 19   Sustainability-labelling of goods and services

The State Government should establish accredited sustainability-labelling schemes for goods and services, with the involvement of community conservation, welfare and consumer groups and business.

Recommendation 20   Sustainable Aboriginal communities

To meet the commitment to an effective and sustainable partnership with Aboriginal communities, the Government of Western Australia will need to:

- recognise the continuing rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal people as the first peoples of Western Australia, including traditional ownership and connection to land and waters;
- provide legislative protection of Aboriginal rights;
- ensure equity with respect to citizenship entitlements;
- apply regional and local approaches to address issues that impact on Aboriginal communities, families and individuals;
- maintain their commitment to democratic processes and structures;
- ensure inclusiveness;
- address issues arising from past acts of displacement;
- provide Aboriginal Cross-Cultural Awareness Training for all Western Australian public sector employees;
- negotiate separate agreements in health, housing, essential services, native title, justice and other areas that impact on Aboriginal people in this state;
- resource programs that improve governance, capacity building and economic independence; and
- work with industry and the private sector to enter into agreements with Aboriginal people.

Recommendation 21   A framework for human rights in Western Australia

A just and sustainable Western Australia must be based upon a sound human rights framework. The State Government should adopt a human rights framework and incorporate it into state legislation. Such a framework should encompass the following:

- acknowledge the inalienable right to land of Aboriginal people and ensure just economic outcomes;

- acknowledge past wrongs and provide for just reparation (including provisions of the original WA Constitution);

- introduce an Aboriginal Land Act, in consultation with Aboriginal people;

- clear acceptance of international obligations by Western Australia and other state, territory and Commonwealth governments in addressing Aboriginal issues;

- clear acceptance of international obligations in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, including their right to appeal;

- equitable access to legal representation for all Western Australians;

- development of a comprehensive, integrated Anti-Racism Strategy;

- replacement of the traditional one-size-fits-all, 'mainstreaming' approach to social policy and programs with one that acknowledges, respects and effectively responds to the state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; and

- introduction of a bill of rights which is incorporated into the state constitution and lobby for a similar provision at the national level.

Recommendation 22   Western Australian Council of Overseas Aid and Development

Establish a Western Australian Council of Overseas Aid and Development, consisting of charities working in this area, relevant State Government portfolios (for example, Commerce and Trade, Education and Training) and universities to:

- coordinate local initiatives in overseas aid and development;

- coordinate state agency programs with aid and development programs;

- coordinate State Government assistance to charities working on overseas aid and development; and

- develop a plan for responses to overseas emergencies that will assist in more coordinated responses from Western Australian organisations.

Recommendation 23   Australia's contribution to overseas aid programs

The Western Australian Government should strongly urge the Australian

Commonwealth Government to increase Australia's contribution to overseas aid and development programs to a level equivalent to at least 1% of Australia's GNP.

Recommendation 24   Western Australian commitment to international treaties

The Western Australian Government should commit Western Australia to complying with the regime of international environmental initiatives (for example, Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21, Kyoto Protocol, Convention on Biological Diversity [which includes protection of traditional knowledge], and international social and human rights initiatives [for example, UN declarations on Human Rights and Rights of the Child, Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination]). Such a commitment should inform the State Sustainability Strategy and all future policy work and decision-making.

Further, the Western Australian Government should urge the Australian Commonwealth Government to make the same commitments.

Recommendation 25   Sustainability Commission

Establish an independent statutory authority, a 'Sustainability Commission', that is representative of government, industry and the community, with the following terms of reference:

a) to provide advice and assistance to the State Government, and report to the State Parliament on moving towards sustainability, including regular reviews and refinements of a State Sustainability Strategy;

b) to coordinate the implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy, and other relevant efforts towards achieving sustainability;

c) to publicly advocate and actively promote sustainability;

d) to report, at least annually, on progress towards sustainability across government, the community and private sectors;

e) to establish sustainability indicator systems that are clear and accessible and that enable government and the community to gauge progress across the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability;

f) to investigate and research progress towards sustainability, and how this can be best achieved;

g) to audit the performance of State Government agencies, authorities and publicly owned corporatised organisations, against their respective sustainability policies and objectives, and report to State Parliament on these audits (see Recommendation 29 for more detail); and

h) to coordinate education programs for primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education sectors and the general community to support the Sustainability agenda.

It is recommended that the proposed Sustainability Commission:

i)   should be established through the passing of a Sustainability Act;

ii)   the Commission would be required to report to both the Premier (or Minister for

Sustainability) and to State Parliament;

iii) should have at least three full time Commissioners with an appropriate range of expertise taking into account the Commission's terms of reference;

iv) should receive its own budget adequate to fulfil all of its legislative responsibilities; and

v) should receive administrative support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Recommendation 26   Sustainability Act

Establish a 'Sustainability Act' that provides for a Sustainability Commission, the powers it would require, and the terms of reference as set out in Recommendation 25 above.

Recommendation 27   Ongoing review of institutional reform

Both the State Sustainability Strategy and the Sustainability Commission should identify processes for ongoing review and exploration of what institutional reforms would best support the Sustainability Agenda. This would include, but not be constrained to, institutional structures.

Recommendation 28   Comprehensive legislative review

The Department of Premier and Cabinet should undertake a comprehensive legislative review of all state legislation for consistency with sustainability principles and objectives.

A precedent for such a comprehensive legislative review has been provided in Australia by the National Competition Policy legislative review process. Lessons of how and how not to undertake such a review can be learnt from that process.

Recommendation 29   State Government's role in implementing sustainability

All State Government agencies should be required to establish:

▪ sustainability policies and objectives that are consistent with an agreed sustainability framework, and

▪ sustainability indicators to measure progress in implementing these policies and achieving the objectives.

Departments and agencies should be required to report annually to the Sustainability Commission and to State Parliament on their progress. The Sustainability Commission would then audit the agencies' annual sustainability reports, and the performance of the agencies against their own policies and objectives.

Recommendation 30   State budget reflects Sustainability Strategy

The State Government should ensure coherence between state budgets and sustainability strategy priorities. "The Strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget mechanism to ensure that plans have the financial resources to achieve their objectives, and do not only represent 'wish lists'. Conversely, the formulation of budgets must be informed by a clear identification of priorities"[2]. This will take many budget cycles to achieve and will need to be done incrementally.

Recommendation 31   Sustainability assessments

The State Government should develop processes for performing sustainability assessments on all significant new and existing policies, programs, legislation and proposals.

Recommendation 32   Sustainability indicator systems

Establish sustainability indicator systems that are clear and accessible and that enable government and the community to gauge progress across the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. Establish the ongoing measurement, collation and reporting of the associated indicators and their implications, at least annually, to State Parliament and the broader community.

Recommendation 33   Role of Local Government

The WA Collaboration supports a greater partnership approach between State and Local Government for sustainability to:

- provide more consistency in the approach taken by Local and State Government, without stifling the ability for local solutions to local problems;

- provide greater support and resources for Local Government to take on a much greater role in sustainability; and

- ensure Local Government sustainability initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 move out of the purely environmental dimension, and are supported to draw upon the community development and economic development resources of Local Governments.

Recommendation 34   Aboriginal Governance and Capacity Building Institute

---

[2] OECD & UNDP (2002) *Sustainable Development Strategies: A Resource Book*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris and United Nations Development Programme, New York. p 33.

International research has demonstrated that one of the key factors in sustainable and economically independent Aboriginal communities is the development of culturally appropriate institutions of self-government. The Western Australian Government has committed to working with Aboriginal communities to build their capacity, governance and leadership. The State Government should fund the establishment of an Aboriginal Governance and Capacity Building Institute.

Recommendation 35   Regional forums for sustainability

As a precursor to developing Regional Sustainability Strategies and to maximise the extent to which current programs and funding can be reoriented towards sustainability, the State Government should first develop regular open forums or roundtables at a regional level that bring together the major stakeholders to build partnerships, and to network and coordinate across sectors.

These forums must be adequately resourced and supported by the State Government and organised through the Regional Development Commissions in the interim, pending the review of the structure of Regional Development Commissions (see Recommendation 36).

Recommendation 36   Role of the Regional Development Commissions

The State Government should thoroughly investigate the potential for restructuring the Regional Development Commissions to encompass sustainability. This needs to be more substantial than a token addition of sustainability principles and functions. It is likely that a comprehensive review of the role and performance of the Regional Development Commissions will be required.

Recommendation 37   Regional support for NGO sector

The State Government through the various Regional Development Commissions should support the establishment of not-for–profit community service networks in the regions as a means to capacity build community services in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation 38   Aboriginal regional agreements

The Statement of Commitment provides for the development of comprehensive regional and local agreements according to the priorities of Aboriginal people in partnership with other stakeholders. The development of appropriate local agreements should be actively pursued.

Recommendation 39   Public housing

The State Government should lobby the Commonwealth Government to increase their annual commitment to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, in order to arrest the decline in funding over the last decade and to respond to increasing unmet housing need and the needs of 28 000 Western Australian households now spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

Recommendation 40   State Housing Strategy

The State Housing Strategy should develop targets for social housing stock, both as absolute numbers and relative to total housing stock. Financial modelling should be undertaken to identify the amount of funding required and a funding strategy should be developed to achieve these targets.

Recommendation 41   Housing and planning

The State Government should expand the current range of incentives for environmentally sustainable housing. Incentives should be provided to encourage sustainable outcomes from housing developments, redevelopments and house renovations, for example, energy efficient appliances, environmentally preferred building materials, solar orientation.

Recommendation 42   Managing urban growth

The State Government should establish urban growth boundaries to contain urban sprawl and focus urban development in areas that have been agreed upon in participatory planning processes. This program must be accompanied with an appropriate affordable housing strategy and a Regionalisation Policy which maximises opportunities for future sustainable urban development outside the Perth Metropolitan area.

Recommendation 43   Sustainability of utility services

All future publicly funded utility strategies, policies and decision-making processes should incorporate sustainability assessments. These sustainability assessments should include full life cycle assessments and culturally and linguistically appropriate social impact assessments for the various options for proposed utility service provision.

Further, the principles of 'integrated resource planning' (as set out in the State Government's Draft State Water Conservation Strategy 2002)[3], should be adapted and integrated into policy development and planning processes for all utility service provision.

Recommendation 44   Access to utility services

In recognition of the essential nature of the services provided by utilities, the State Government should implement a 'Utilities Assistance Scheme'; implement a 'Customer Service Code' to ensure protection of all consumers; ensure that incentives and rebates related to utilities services are directed specifically at low income earners; and ensure that Aboriginal citizens throughout the state have equitable access to essential services like power and water.
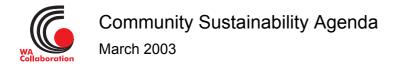
Recommendation 45   Access to transport services

In recognition of the critical importance of transport services, the State Government should review the full range of publicly funded transport services and policies, taking into account the role of each mode of transport in terms of sustainability, and the short and long term pricing policies. Key objectives of the review should be to achieve equitable access to transport services, promotion of sustainable transport use patterns and reduction of need for transport.

Recommendation 46   Energy

Key challenges include making greater use of renewable and energy efficient technologies, appliances and practices, and reducing our energy consumption per capita. The State Government should

---

[3] Water and Rivers Commission (2002) *State Water Conservation Strategy* (*Western Australia*). Water and Rivers Commission, Perth.

- include requirements on energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in the building code (for example, passive solar utilisation, insulation, appliances, compulsory energy rating); and
- develop innovative financing solutions for energy efficient and renewable energy appliances (such as leasing schemes, sharing of costs and benefits between landlords and tenants, low interest loans).

Recommendation 47   Community legal services

The legal rights and access to justice of those who are most vulnerable in our community must be protected. Additional funds must be provided to expand the level of community legal services in Western Australia. Funding should be linked to the findings of and the proposals arising out of the review of legal services currently being undertaken by the State and Commonwealth Governments in Western Australia.

FUNDAMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. Community and Sustainability

Any major societal transformation can only occur rapidly and peacefully if there is broad community[4] understanding and support for that transformation. So it is with sustainability.

The concept of sustainability provides the opportunity to explore and re-assess our community's values and priorities. Central to the success of any sustainability agenda will be the ability to collectively identify appropriate societal goals and values, and to achieve a greater level of agreement about those goals and values. As the Environmental Protection Authority's position statement on sustainability notes:
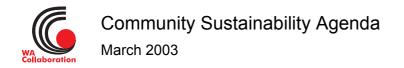
> Aiming for a sustainable society will involve developing a vision of the desired future, finding viable pathways to move in that direction and building community support for the process. Developing the vision through a process of community participation is a crucial first step, but that alone may not achieve the political momentum to implement the vision. It is at least as important to devise viable pathways from where we are to where we want to go. Articulating those viable pathways is the key to gathering support from a broad coalition of interests for the substantial changes that are needed. Without such viable paths, there is no real prospect of developing the political commitment to change.[5]

Each of these steps — creating the vision, finding the viable pathways and building community support — must be based on broad dialogue throughout the community and genuinely participatory processes. The initial discussion and deliberation must be stimulated in all types of communities at all scales, incorporating communities of interest, local communities and regional communities. Many of these discussions are already happening, but are uncoordinated, and as yet lack coherence.

Many participants in the WA Collaboration process expressed the desire for greater public conversation about sustainability — what it means in general, and what it means at a local and regional level.

---

[4] Here the term community is used to refer to geographically located communities (from the scale of the State of Western Australia downwards) as well as to communities of interest.

[5] Environmental Protection Authority (2002) *Towards Sustainability,* Preliminary Position Statement No. 6. p 21. Perth.

However, these conversations must be based upon a fundamental understanding of diversity of peoples, values and ethical frameworks within Western Australia.

The difficulty of envisioning and coordinating action for a sustainable society in the absence of shared community values and priorities for the future was highlighted at most of the discussions coordinated by the WA Collaboration. Finding a shared vision for a better future while at the same time respecting diversity in the community will undoubtedly be a major challenge.

Genuine Participation, not Token Consultation

There is broad dissatisfaction amongst the community with current consultative and participatory processes of all levels of government. Most participants in the discussions coordinated by the WA Collaboration emphasised the importance of a genuinely participatory approach to creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

This dissatisfaction could be summed up by what has been called the **3 — I** model, where government agencies **Inform** (the public), **Invite** (comments) and **Ignore** (opinions).[6] In general, consultative processes of all levels of government have not kept up with community demands to be involved in open and transparent decision-making processes. In addition, access to genuine participation and consultation opportunities are extremely limited for Aboriginal people, people speaking English as a second language, and socio-economically disadvantaged people.

The WA Collaboration recognises that the Western Australian Government is endeavouring to improve the practice of community engagement throughout government, through the work of the Citizens and Civics Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. However, the experience of participants in WA Collaboration discussions would suggest that there is some way to go until this work impacts upon experiences 'on the ground'.

Community participation in the sustainability agenda is vital to ensure that the knowledge, wisdom and creativity of all individuals, groups and stakeholders can be identified and considered. Goals, priorities and outcomes can then be discussed, negotiated and established at the most appropriate level or scale.

Supporting Community Action for Sustainability

At the same time as many in the community are advocating greater participation and consultation, there is also increasing concern about the pattern for all levels of government to increasingly devolve responsibility to community and NGOs for a range of activities (such as social service provision, environmental and land

---

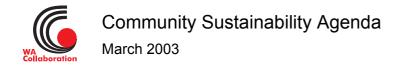[6] OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p. 8.

management) without devolving commensurate power and resources. See Section 11. Services and Sustainability for more discussion about this issue.

Across the broader community many people active in their communities are becoming 'burnt out'. Greater consideration must be given as to how best to support organisations and individuals working voluntarily in the community sector.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1   Foster broad dialogue throughout the community on sustainability as part of an innovative communications program

The idea of sustainability is not a familiar one for many people throughout Western Australia. Therefore, any 're-orientation towards sustainability' must include an effective and innovative communications program to provide information as well as to broaden the current conception of sustainability to one that reflects the diversity of peoples, perspectives and interests in Western Australia.
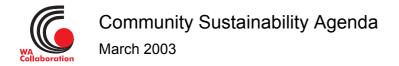
An innovative communications program, which looks beyond standard communications methods such as pamphlets, websites and written information, would be an important precursor to a genuinely participatory approach to future planning for sustainability.

Such a communications program should:

- be well resourced and supported by State and Local Government, possibly in partnership with major stakeholders from civil society and the private sector;

- be a long term program for change, recognising that ongoing dialogue about sustainability and a just and sustainable future for Western Australia will be necessary;

- be culturally and linguistically appropriate;

- incorporate communications and engagement strategies developed as a result of the Gordon Inquiry and the Statement of Commitment;

- recognise the need for capacity building strategies that allow individuals, families and communities to interact with institutions and organisations in a more equitable manner;

- reflect a strong commitment to social justice, gender equity, multiculturalism, human rights, and the values/principles of fairness, equity and justice;

- be based on best practice communications principles, for example:

  o a shift from didactic ways ('us teaching them') to more inclusive and two-way methods of communication, learning and dialogue (for example, roundtable discussions, seminars, negotiations, establishing strategic partnerships).[7]

  o empowering individuals and communities to take part in learning, knowledge creation, sharing and use throughout the life of the program.[8]

---

[7] OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p 228.
[8] OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p 228.

> o recognising the challenge of developing an education program in a context of an over supply of information and education programs.
>
> ▪ coordinated with other major sustainability programs (such as the development of Community Sustainability Indicators – see Recommendation 32) to maximise their educative potential.

Recommendation 2   Supporting community action for sustainability

There are already a large number of community groups and non-government or not-for-profit organisations undertaking substantial work towards a just and sustainable future for Western Australia. This work of the community and NGO sector should be supported in the following ways.

▪ Where government funding is provided to NGOs and community groups it should be provided on a three-yearly basis rather than on yearly applications;

▪ State and Local Governments should build the capacity of the community sector to engage with sustainability through:

> o a long term, well resourced communications program (see Recommendation 1);
>
> o opportunities for training and other educational opportunities (for example, the current Community Builders Initiative, and incorporation into the Education Department's curricula); and
>
> o ensuring access to secure resources for the community/NGO sector.

▪ The contribution that the community sector can make to sustainability should be honoured through genuine consultation and participation processes undertaken by all levels of government and the private sector.

▪ Where service delivery is contracted by State Government agencies to not-for-profit community service organisations, the State Government should fund adequate annual indexation adjustments.

▪ Acknowledge the work of the voluntary sector by:

> o recognising the value of unpaid work in official reporting, including in economic statistics for the state and reports on sectors that involve volunteers, and
>
> o maximising opportunities for people to contribute to the community through volunteer work by, for example, allowing public sector workers time off and flexible work hours to do volunteer work; establishing a credit scheme for voluntary work; recognising welfare recipients' volunteer efforts as sufficient for their mutual obligation requirements.

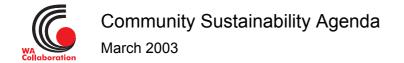## Recommendation 3   Genuine participation in Western Australia

The WA Collaboration is committed to a genuinely participatory approach to sustainability in Western Australia. The WA Collaboration recognises that the State Government has gone some way towards recognising the fundamental importance of the interaction between government and its citizens through the work of the Citizens and Civics Unit, and other initiatives such as the Statement of Commitment signed with ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) and peak Aboriginal bodies.

Decision-making processes of State and Local Government, the private sector and larger NGOs have to provide the **opportunity** and **resources** for people to participate in the planning, assessment, research and evaluation phases. The WA Collaboration has found that community members are seeking the following in consultation and participation processes:

- meeting people within their comfort zone (the who, how, where, timing, format and facilitation of the process and cultural and linguistic appropriateness);

- using personal invitations to participate;

- involving people from the beginning and working together to decide what 'success' will look like;

- being aware of cultural sensitivities;

- providing support and training for people to be involved in decision-making, for example; negotiation and communication skills; and

- using a variety of processes and activities.

Therefore, State and Local Government agencies should:

- incorporate into their policy and procedure manuals a concrete method for consultation and participation that incorporates a 'whole of government' approach, including drawing the lessons gleaned from the Statement of Commitment and Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reconciliation Framework processes;

- ensure that appropriate budgetary allocations are made to implement best practice community engagement, as outlined in the Consulting Citizens Guide, and report annually on progress; and

- ensure that any future implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy, particularly at the regional level, is based on best practice community engagement processes.

2. Ethics and Sustainability

Sustainability requires the development of a new ethical framework — one which enables a vision for a better world. The various perspectives of the groups involved in the WA Collaboration incorporate a whole range of ethical frameworks, for example:

▪ an ecological ethic which recognises that the fate of human beings is intrinsically linked to the fate of the biosphere, as well as recognising the intrinsic value of our environment;

▪ a religious ethic which recognises the responsibility of humans to be custodians of God's creation;

▪ the Aboriginal concept of 'country' where people, culture and land are all tied into a holistic experience of 'country'; and

▪ an ethic which recognises fundamental human rights, such as those expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Yet at the same time, the dominant ethical frameworks of the West appear to be rampant consumerism primarily to foster economic growth, tied in with individualism, divisive politics, lack of corporate responsibility and a fundamentally short term view of society and the Earth.

Ethical behaviour does not develop in isolation, but rather is founded on a worldview. As the Council of Churches of WA points out, spiritual traditions provide worldviews that explain our place in the world, our relationship with a higher being, and our relationships with each other. Such traditions provide a strong base for an ethical framework, and strong rationale and motivation for ethical behaviour.

The challenge of articulating ethical frameworks for sustainability that build on the existing diversity of ethical frameworks (such as spiritual traditions, Aboriginal notions of country, multiculturalism and a new ecological ethic) is closely tied to a major theme of the Regional Sustainability Workshops, that of creating a shared vision for a sustainable future (see Section 1. Community and Sustainability).

As Davison notes:

> There are many different ethical foundations, and no single "common future", that can contribute to the building of a more sustaining world. The trick, of course, is that of finding common ground without pretending that there is only common ground. The trick is to build solidarity of purpose that respects the diversity of motivations and values that lie behind this solidarity.[9]

---

[9] Davison, A. (2002) *Sustainability: The ability to sustain "the good",* Submission to the State Sustainability Strategy, on CD-ROM, "Focus on the Future".

All of us need to take personal responsibility for contributing towards sustainability in our own lives, lifestyles, consumer habits, our work lives and our involvement with civil society. As Gandhi said, "We must become the change we want to see".

Recommendations

Recommendation 4   Incorporate consideration of ethics

In recognition of the importance of ethics in public policy and community decision-making, consideration of relevant ethical values and implications should be incorporated into all public policy consultation processes and policy documents.

3. Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is the dimension of sustainability that covers the issues and goals of society that address the welfare of people in the broadest sense. Achieving a good quality of life for all people lies at the heart of social sustainability. The challenge is to create communities that can sustain themselves indefinitely, while allowing people to live peacefully in a just society.

Social equity must be a key principle to be applied in developing environmental, economic and social policies. One aspect of that challenge is how to live within and use the environment in a way that can be sustained, as discussed in the next section 'Environmental Sustainability: Objectives and Constraints'.

The Challenge of Integration

Two well accepted principles of sustainability are inter-generational equity and intra-generational equity.

Inter-**generational equity** is about ensuring equity **between** generations. One aspect of this is ensuring that future generations are left with an environment and a society that is at least as healthy, diverse and productive as the one the present generation experiences.

This is one of the many areas where the goals of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability could appear to conflict and coincide at the same time.

Protecting the environment into the future helps to ensure future generations have a healthy, diverse and productive environment that allows them to meet their social goals. At the same time, maintaining a healthy, diverse and productive environment may constrain the approaches that the current generation can use to meet its social goals.

There are also important inter-generational equity considerations relating to our social goals. For example, how are we going to fund the provision of welfare services in the future within the context of an aging demographic profile? Sustainability is also about what kind of a society we create for our children.

Intra-generational equity is the consideration of equity between all people of the present generation in Western Australia as well as the rest of the world. Within Western Australia, issues of equity have to be considered from the perspectives of gender, ethnicity, Aboriginal peoples, geographic location and differing abilities. Equity in the global context is discussed further in Section 7. Global Sustainability below.

WACOSS Model of Social Sustainability

The Western Australia Council of Social Service (WACOSS) has recently developed a Model of Social Sustainability[10], based on the following definition of social sustainability:

> Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic, and provide a good quality of life.[11]

The WACOSS Model of Social Sustainability also includes a set of five principles that "… are designed to capture the goals of socially sustainable communities and to this end, are aspirational and visionary statements that describe what makes a community healthy and liveable both now and in the future."[12] The five principles are listed below.

1. **Equity** — the community provides equitable opportunities and outcomes for all its members, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community.

2. **Diversity** — the community promotes and encourages diversity.

3. **Interconnectedness** — the community provides processes, systems and structures that promote relationships and connections within and outside the community at the formal, informal and institutional level.

4. **Quality of Life** — the community ensures that basic needs are met and fosters a good quality of life for all members at the individual, group and community level.

5. **Democracy and Governance** — the community provides democratic processes and open and accountable governance structures.

A set of thirty-six characteristics have been developed to further elaborate on these five principles, along with a collection of statements which help explain each of the characteristics.

From this work, WACOSS found four core issues that were seen by many as fundamental to the notion of social sustainability. These were:

▪ employment (see below and Section 5. Economic Means for Sustainability);

---

[10] Barron, L. & Gauntlett, E. (2002) *Model of Social Sustainability*, Stage 1 Report Housing and Sustainable Communities Indicators Project, WA Council of Social Services, Perth.
[11] Barron & Gauntlett (2002) op cit., p iv.
[12] Barron & Gauntlett (2002) op cit., p iv.

- housing (see Section 10. Settlements and Sustainability);

- services (see Section 11. Services and Sustainability); and

- community engagement processes (see Section 1. Community and Sustainability and Section 8. Governance and Processes)[13].

There are a range of other social sustainability issues that particularly impact on rural, regional and remote communities, as discovered in the development of the WACOSS Model of Social Sustainability and the WA Collaboration process. These include:

- the higher costs of essential items, such as food, particularly in remote communities;

- the negative impacts of metro-centric policies and programs and the lack of consultation around policy and program development;

- higher rates of unemployment, particularly for some groups;

- the impact of 'fly-in fly-out' employment practices;

- the lack of affordable housing options, and particularly the severe contraction in the low cost end of the private rental market;

- limited opportunities and services to build community spirit and social capital;

- the impact of the digital divide and lack of access to adequate tele-communications services; and

- the lack of access to services and to diverse service types. In the WA Collaboration process, a major theme was the provision of services like education and training which can dramatically affect stability and the 'spirit' of communities, when families have to move away to access opportunities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5   Interim Social Impact Assessment process

As an interim measure towards a comprehensive Social Impact Assessment process which would feed into a Sustainability Assessment structure, all state budget revenue proposals should be subject to a social impact assessment to ascertain whether separately or cumulatively they impact unfairly on low-income families and individuals, particularly those experiencing multiple layers of disadvantage as a consequence of gender, disability or ethnicity.

As a guide, rises in taxes and charges should be kept at or below the Consumer Price Index for low income families and individuals. All state budget revenue proposals should be subsequently modified if they can be shown to disadvantage this target group.

---

[13] Barron & Gauntlett (2002) op cit., p 17.

Recommendation 6   Address unemployment

There are a number of specific measures which State Government departments and agencies can take to address unemployment, particularly localised unemployment.

- Capital works projects funded by the State Government should include provision for targeting the long-term unemployed and those otherwise disadvantaged in the labour market as a proportion of the workforce, and this requirement should be specified in project tender documents.

- 'Reasonable hours' legislation in state awards should be enforced.

- State Government employees should be encouraged to job share and take part-time work arrangements.

- Specific industry development programs should be implemented in the employment-intensive areas of health and community services and environmental protection and repair, so that job generation also meets social and environmental needs.

Recommendation 7 A 'Thriving Communities Pilot Program'

The State Government should develop a 'Thriving Communities Pilot Program' which focuses on the prevention of local social and environmental problems through collaborative partnerships between government, community organisations and local people.

The State Government's undertaking, in line with the Statement of Commitment, to build economically independent and sustainable communities through partnerships and comprehensive regional agreements with Aboriginal communities, is a good example of this approach.

These pilots are to be situated in a mixture of metropolitan and regional high need areas. Community development funds would be made available in the first instance to pilot regions to facilitate collaboration between government and community services. Local networks will integrate the wide range of pre-existing local structures to develop a responsive local network that focuses on outcomes for the community.

The goals of the local networks are to:

- build connection and civic pride through the engagement of the local community in social and environmental planning and service delivery;

- rationalise the plethora of pre-existing local advisory networks on specific social and environmental issues; and

- contribute to a sustainable agenda for local communities.

These networks should become the vehicle to implement government priority social and environmental initiatives. These networks could then feed into regional approaches to sustainability (see Recommendation 35).

Recommendation 8 Address poverty and disadvantage

To assist Western Australians in poverty, the State Government should fund:

- A 'Financial Advice Hotline' similar to those operating in other Australian states to provide Western Australians with detailed financial advice. This cost effective strategy will allow regional, rural and remote people to access financial advice and will decrease demand on financial counselling and other crisis services.

- Fund community education projects that encourage community awareness of poverty and sustainable living and general education on issues of credit and debt.

- Fund programs for assisting disadvantaged children to get into school and remain there, with financial support to assist with school fees, books and so on.

Recommendation 9   Disability funding

A significant number of people with disabilities and their families are in critical circumstances and urgently require services such as accommodation, respite and alternatives to employment. These crises are real and reflect poorly on our community.

The State Government should provide adequate funding to ensure that people with disabilities and their families have the opportunities to participate in the life of the community and have a quality of life that reflects the standards set out in the *Disabilities Services Act 1993* (WA).

More specifically, funding should be provided to:

- resolve unmet demand to avert these crises;

- provide future funding based on population growth;

- build capacity to ensure these crises do not recur, and

- meet reasonable annual cost increases of community agencies.

Recommendation 10   Recognise cultural, linguistic and religious diversity

All social policy and programs should be approached with acknowledgement and respect for Western Australia's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. The provision and funding of government services should reflect this approach.

4. Environmental Sustainability: Objectives and Constraints

The environmental dimension of sustainability is the other key dimension (along with the social dimension) that defines the concept of sustainability. This dimension incorporates a series of broad societal objectives and the environmental constraints within which they must be achieved. These objectives and constraints have been articulated in various ways, but most have common themes of:

- society living within the carrying capacity of the Earth and our ecosystems;
- conserving biodiversity;
- maintaining the ecological functioning of the planet's ecosystems, and
- using natural resources in a sustainable manner.

There is a rapidly developing global consensus (based on an accumulating body of scientific research) that human activities are causing a growing range of environmental problems at all scales from local, to regional, state and global. The major environmental problems and challenges facing Western Australia are well documented elsewhere, most notably in the Western Australian State of the Environment Report (1998) and Australian State of the Environment Reports (1996, 2001)[14].

The environmental issues which emerged as major themes throughout the discussions held by the WA Collaboration include:

- water usage outstripping our sustainable water resources;
- dependency on fossil fuels, and the impacts of their use on greenhouse gas emissions and air quality;
- a broad range of land management issues related to unsustainable agricultural and pastoral practices, which vary across the regions, from pastoral grazing to salinity to the proliferation of blue-gum plantations in the South West;
- maintaining biodiversity;
- maintaining native vegetation;
- maintaining waterways, wetlands and marine environments;
- waste management, particularly in the larger regional centres and the metropolitan area, and

---

[14] Australian State of the Environment Committee (2002), *Australia: State of the Environment Main Report*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; State of the Environment Advisory Committee (1996), *State of the Environment Australia*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.

▪ fire, especially in the South West and the Kimberley.

Sustainable Consumption

Most environmental problems have been caused directly or indirectly by the impacts of human activities of the past or the present. All sectors of our society (government, business and industry, non-government, families and individuals) have contributed to these impacts, and therefore, all sectors have to be part of the solution.

The State Government's 1998 State of the Environment Report concluded that: "Western Australia, in common with most other developed societies, exhibits a pattern of increasing per capita consumption and associated increase in production of waste. Increasing consumption is depleting essential and finite natural resources and impacting adversely on the environment . . . There is an urgent need to move our society's culture of consumption to one based on conservation and the re-use of resources."[15]

The challenge of an integrated approach

The interaction between achieving the goals of the environmental dimension of sustainability and the social dimension of sustainability is complex. Living within the constraints (or the carrying capacity) of the environment often seems to be in tension with meeting social goals.

This is an important tension, relevant to many policy decisions. For example, in the area of utilities, how do we strike a balance between setting a price for water which reflects the true environmental costs, while not out-pricing people on low or fixed incomes from a service which is essential to health and quality of life?

However, fundamental to the notion of sustainability is the recognition that if society can't live within the ecological means of the environment, environmental degradation will inevitably follow, which will eventually affect the quality of life for humans that depend on that environment.

Sustainability challenges us to find ways to achieve the environmental goals of sustainability while improving the quality of life of people in the short term, as well as protecting the long term ability to maintain or improve quality of life. Some positive examples of meeting this challenge include:

▪ **improving public transport services** and increasing their patronage has benefits in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and other car related problems, while at the same time increasing transport options and

---

[15] Government of Western Australia (1998) *Environment Western Australia 1998: State of the Environment*. Department of Environmental Protection, p 15, Perth.

convenience for people, increasing transport safety and stimulating greater sense of community;

- **designing energy efficient dwellings** for public housing and low income housing which reduces reliance on fossil fuels and lowers energy costs for households;

- **ensuring water supplies are not polluted** helps to protect the health of the community reliant on these water resources, as well as the ecosystems which are rely on the resources; and

- **minimising degradation of agricultural and pastoral lands** has obvious impacts on the environment and on the social fabric of communities, which are currently facing loss of productivity, economic loss and ultimately dislocation as land degradation increases.

Recommendations

Recommendation 11   Resource use and sustainable consumption

The State Government should establish a program to monitor the important parameters of Western Australia's resource use and consumption patterns and related environmental and social impacts.

Ambitious, but achievable targets for reducing Western Australia's per capita ecological footprint[16] should be adopted. Strategies for achieving these targets will then need to be developed and implemented. These strategies should not place a disproportionate burden on rural, regional or remote communities.

Aspects of this program should include:

- an accredited, standardised methodology for ecological footprint analyses;

- regular reporting and publishing; and

- a well resourced community awareness program, incorporating:

  o a compendium of advice and information on 'Sustainable Living' on a central website, and

  o an accompanying Hotline, which links people to the same information and contact details for sources of more detailed advice.

---

[16] "The Ecological Footprint is a measure of the "load" imposed by a given population on nature. It represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharge by that population." Wackernagel, M. & Rees, W. (1996) *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia. In other words, an Ecological Footprint is a simple accounting tool that adds up human impacts and expresses these ecological impacts in units of area, which can then be compared with the total area of productive land actually available in a region, country or on the planet as a whole.

Recommendation 12   Greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments

The State Government should commit to ensuring Western Australia makes its proportional contribution to enable Australia to meet its Kyoto Protocol Targets for greenhouse gas emissions. This should include completing, funding and implementing a comprehensive State Greenhouse Strategy.

The State Government should also urge the Australian Commonwealth Government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We have a responsibility to meet our international obligations in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as the Kyoto Protocol, and it is also in our self interest to do so. This will be easier to achieve if Western Australia can trade carbon rights within Australia, and if Australia can trade carbon rights with other countries. The latter will not be possible unless Australia signs the Kyoto Protocol which provides the essential legally binding framework for carbon trading.

In order to achieve this, future developments of the Western Australian economy should not be skewed towards energy intensive industries. Equal policy priority should be given to less greenhouse intense, economic growth sectors, such as the services sector of our economy.

Recommendation 13   Funding environmental management agencies and programs

The level of funding currently provided to State Government environmental agencies is inadequate to meet their legislative responsibilities, and to implement their wide range of environmentally related strategies, policies and programs.

This has major impacts on public health, on lower socio-economic groups and on environmental degradation.

The State Government should substantially increase state budget allocations to State Government environmental agencies in order to reverse the decline in funding to these agencies, and allow them to fulfil their legislative responsibilities.

Recommendation 14   Joint management of National Parks and Conservation Reserves

The State Government should expedite the identification and development of joint management programs for National Parks with traditional owners based on sustainability criteria and opportunities for economic development for Aboriginal people. This would include the allocation of adequate resources to enable joint management regimes to be effective.

5. Economic Means to Sustainability

Most governments of the world aim to achieve economic growth, because they see that objective as the key way to achieve a wide range of societal goals. This is reflected in the use of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a primary measure of well being of the nation. These societal goals include:

- increasing quality of life;

- building community wealth;

- being able to afford social welfare programs to support the poor and vulnerable in society;

- providing essential goods and services through government; and

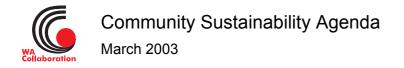- engaging in meaningful employment of choice and/or education and training opportunities.

The goal of economic growth and many of the associated economic goals can be described as a **means to a set of ends**. The ends are the other societal goals listed above. In the past it has been assumed that if economic growth is achieved, environmental and social goals for society will also be achieved as a result, in some cases with the government playing a role to reach these goals.

Internationally, this mindset is known as the FROG scenario, where FROG stands for First Raise Our Growth. Quite clearly the FROG scenario cannot address many of the environmental and social challenges of our time. The aim of sustainability is to create a new alternative economic framework that can meet these challenges. A key question is, therefore, **how can economic policy and instruments be reformed to assist society in moving towards sustainability?**

Currently, the market delivers outcomes set by framework conditions, such as economic, social, fiscal and environmental policy. One important area of policy reform for sustainability is setting the right framework and making the markets work for all.

At the same time, however, it is important that the limitations of markets and other economic tools be acknowledged. The entire world and its complexity cannot be reframed as an economic policy issue, and there are many issues that existing traditional economic theories and policies simply can't address or can provide only partial solutions.

There is potential for reforming the taxation system to assist in pursuing sustainability, which will require greater public discussion about how that might best be done. Other issues which require discussion include the equity of the structure of the current taxation system, the willingness and ability of all sectors of society to pay more to ensure we better meet our social and environmental goals,

and the possibility for the taxation system to be better designed to remove disincentives and provide incentives for living more sustainably.

Equity and Sustainability

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has argued: "The costs of achieving sustainability must be born equitably and cannot be at the expense of the disadvantaged."[17] Consideration should be given to the social equity issues of major, adverse employment implications of new policies.

The costs of social and economic dislocation must be integrated into the decision-making processes when policies which move towards sustainability are likely to severely affect particular processes and industries. Structural adjustment packages may assist in such cases. This could involve promotion of job creation, training and retraining, provision of support services for workers who have been severely disadvantaged as a result of changes to industries due to the shift towards sustainability, and options to support displaced workers or business into new technologies or ventures.

More broadly, the issue of income security for the unemployed and employed, including those on low incomes, needs to be considered in all the dimensions of sustainability policy.
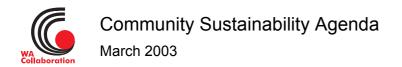
Economic Diversification and Promoting New Sustainable Industries

Economic diversification and the creation of new sustainable industries will be crucial to the sustainability of Western Australia, particularly outside the metropolitan area. Areas such as ecotourism, cultural/heritage tourism, environmental management and services, renewable energy industries, social service provision and the information economy are often promoted as important new sustainable industries.

The role of new industries and growth of existing industries in a sustainable future needs to be analysed carefully, because some sustainable industries (for example, sustainable tourism) still have a significant ecological footprint, as a result of their travel and transport intensity. In addition, some sections of the service industry are poorly paid or highly casualised, therefore having implications for the employment opportunities they provide. A robust form of sustainability assessment will be required to ensure the sustainability of new business proposals.

At the same time, maximising the sustainability of existing industries must be a priority. The challenge is to enable industries to optimise their contribution to the sustainable development of the communities they operate in, by providing goods

---

[17] ACTU (1991) *ACTU 1991 Congress Environment and Sustainable Development Policy*. Accessed from the internet on 29 January 2003 at http://www.actu.asn.au

and services that meet genuine needs, are affordable and do not cause unacceptable social and/or environmental impact.

Reworking Regional Development

Some regions in Western Australia are facing a significant expansion of development, such as the Kimberley, South West, and South Coast regions. As was noted at one Regional Sustainability Workshop, "The development will happen, the challenge will be to ensure we get it right, and avoid the mistakes of other areas"[18].

An effective regional approach to sustainability will be essential for creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia (see Section 9: Sustainability at a Regional Level for further discussion).

The Role of Business and Industry, Together with Government

Views on the role of business and industry, together with government, in sustainability differed from region to region. In North West regions such as the Pilbara and Kimberley, large mining companies obviously have a significant impact on the social and environmental fabric of the region. Similarly, in areas such as Cockburn, the interaction between industry and the local community is not always positive.

Adverse or negative industrial relations legislation, policy and practice can militate against social sustainability outcomes. In many cases this can, and has, lead to workers being forced to accept significantly diminished wages and conditions as well as serious impacts in terms of job and income security. The question of the 'casualisation' of the workforce (high levels of casual and temporary contract work) is a direct consequence of such adverse strategies and leads to dislocation and insecurity amongst workers and their families.

In general, community members around Western Australia are looking for business and industry to take on a greater role in the community, as 'good citizens' rather than 'just handing out money'.

Some businesses are already making significant contributions to sustainable development. One of the key challenges ahead is to facilitate widespread application of best practices to maximise the contribution of business and industry to the sustainable development of the Western Australian community.

---

[18] WA Collaboration, Kununurra Regional Workshop, 16 November 2002. See workshop reports on the internet at www.wacollaboration.org.au

Recommendations

Recommendation 15   Support sustainability through economic means

A large scale inquiry should be undertaken to advise the State Government on how to support the sustainability agenda through economic policies, mechanisms and instruments. The inquiry would:

- identify best practice and promote it (such as establishing an accreditation process for businesses using sustainability best practice; and using government acquisition policies to favour such businesses);

- investigate the most appropriate models for community economic development (for example, economic independence strategies for Aboriginal communities and community-based non-government organisations);

- identify and remove government subsidies, incentives and other economic instruments that encourage and support unsustainable industries, activities and behaviours;

- identify and introduce possible government subsidies, incentives and other economic instruments that encourage sustainable industries, activities and behaviour; and

- similarly, identify disincentives for sustainable practices and remove them, and identify disincentives for unsustainable practices and introduce them.

The proposed Sustainability Commission should coordinate or commission this inquiry.

Recommendation 16   Radical increase in resource use efficiency

The State Government should adopt achievable but ambitious targets for a radical increase in the efficiency with which Western Australia uses its resources. In other words, 'do more with less'. The WA Collaboration supports the adoption of the recommendations in the draft State Sustainability Strategy to:

- increase resource efficiency (referred to as Eco-efficiency) by four times the current levels; and

- reduce the total impact of the Western Australian society on the environment by half, as measured by the ecological footprint model (see Section 4. Environmental Sustainability: Objectives and Constraints).

These are significant 'stretch targets', which will not come from incremental changes, and will instead require new innovative approaches to all aspects of our society's use of resources.

Recommendation 17   Business and community interaction

Business should continue to develop, establish and improve partnerships with the
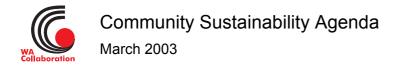
community. This should be based on a willingness to listen to community pressure, a commitment to community participation in areas of key concern to the community, an approach to resource use that better meets the ongoing economic needs of regional centres and remote communities, and investment in strategies that build the capacity of individuals and communities to improve their governance institutions and practices.

This could be facilitated by:

- educating community and business leaders about ways of effective collaboration and partnerships;

- making sure that relevant information is readily available;

- forging greater links between the business sector and Aboriginal communities, particularly through Comprehensive Regional Agreements, to help promote economic independence; and

- gradually extending partnerships into more strategic business decisions (such as siting of new mines or other major industrial facilities).

Recommendation 18   WA Indigenous Economic Strategy

The State Government should allocate sufficient funds to ensure the implementation of the WA Indigenous Economic Strategy which is being developed with ATSIC, state agencies and other key stakeholders.

Recommendation 19   Sustainability-labelling of goods and services

The State Government should establish accredited sustainability-labelling schemes for goods and services, with the involvement of community conservation, welfare and consumer groups and business.

Such schemes could assist consumers to understand the environmental and social consequences and impacts of the goods and services they use, and allow them to make more informed decisions. This scheme should use Life Cycle Assessments[19], and Social Impact Assessments of goods and services as a basis for the grading of the goods and services.

---

[19] "Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) is now being used to evaluate the 'cradle to grave' effects of a product [or service] on the environment over its entire life cycle. LCA is being used for a range of purposes, such as comparing the environmental performance of new and older products, setting eco-labelling criteria, and in developing business strategies and investment plans." LCA can also "help link particular production [and service provision] systems with multiple sustainability issues and different institutional responsibilities." OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p.18, p. 268.

6. Cultural Sustainability

Aboriginal People

Aboriginal people have lived in this country for more than 500 generations with an integrated social, environmental and economic perspective. Since colonisation the governance systems that sustained Aboriginal communities have been eroded.

Aboriginal people and their cultures are a unique and invaluable part of the State of Western Australia. They have continuing rights and responsibilities as the first peoples of Western Australia, including traditional ownership and connection to land and waters. These rights should be respected and accommodated within the legal, political and economic system that has developed and evolved in Western Australia since 1829.

Wealth creation in the general Western Australian community is fundamentally important in the process of addressing issues facing Aboriginal people. Certainty for industry's development proposals and security for Aboriginal peoples' cultural heritage and values must be equally respected within the overall development of the state.

The circumstances of Aboriginal people can differ significantly between regions and localities. Regional and local approaches are required to address issues that impact on Aboriginal communities, families and individuals. To achieve improvement, government and Aboriginal people need to work together in partnership and share responsibilities. It is only through this process that sustainability can be achieved.

The challenge for government, industry and the broader community is how to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to rebuild the governance systems necessary to significantly improve the health, education, living standards and wealth of Aboriginal Western Australians.

To assist this process, a number of objectives need to be addressed, including:
- improved program support for long term change;
- improved consultation with Aboriginal people to better consider resource use of Aboriginal land;
- improved opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in the management and maintenance of Aboriginal land and state forests, reserves, land held in trust and other land similarly gazetted;
- improved protection and conservation of Aboriginal knowledge and heritage;
- improved education, training and employment opportunities; and

- improved access to resources to assist in economic development and wealth creation activities.

The State Government and ATSIC have agreed to a Statement of Commitment to a New and Just Relationship between the Government of Western Australia and Aboriginal Western Australians. This Commitment will result in a Partnership Framework that is built largely on a four-fold principled approach: inter-agency cooperation; flexible arrangements; better outcomes; and sustainable communities.

The Statement of Commitment, in association with the Reconciliation Framework agreed to by Council of Australian Governments (COAG), form the basis of a 'whole of government' approach the cohesion of which is unprecedented in Australian civil service.

The application of the Statement of Commitment has led to a number of Priority Projects that include, but are not limited to, Comprehensive Regional Agreement processes for Tjurabalan, Martu and Northbridge, as well as policy projects designed to set benchmarks (indicators) for service delivery and integration and to drive the coordinated response to the recommendations of the Gordon Inquiry. This process is designed to provide the opportunity for government agencies in Western Australia, be they Commonwealth, state or local, to develop comprehensive, coordinated long term social, environmental and economic improvements which are required to develop sustainable Aboriginal communities.

A meaningful process of reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal rights which addresses the many social and economic inequalities experienced by Aboriginal people is fundamental to achieving sustainability in Western Australia. We will not be able to claim that Western Australia is even on a path towards sustainability until at least the basic needs of Aboriginal people are met and their rights (particularly to land) are effectively realised. Bridging the divide between Aboriginal communities and the wider community is essential for a sustainable Western Australia.

Some of the most significant issues that were raised through the WA Collaboration consultation process include the following.

Cultural sustainability. The loss of language leads to the loss of a huge body of traditional knowledge, particularly of the fragile environment of Western Australia. The values of Aboriginal societies, such as cultural heritage, lifestyles, intellectual and spiritual knowledge, must be protected in a sustainable society.

Lack of proper involvement and broad consultation with Aboriginal people. Current efforts to involve Aboriginal people and their interests through genuine negotiation are inadequate (the WA Collaboration acknowledges that its own consultation process, including the Regional Sustainability Workshops, was not ideal). We also need to recognise that most Aboriginal communities don't have

direct access to government, existing government policies and programs, decision-makers and capacity building opportunities. Also the cultural and language barriers in talking with and engaging Aboriginal people on sustainability must be recognised.

Lack of opportunities for economic independence, **education and training for Aboriginal people** — remote areas in particular lack these opportunities where around 50% of Aboriginal people are under the age of 20 years. With higher birth rates than the general Australian population, this will mean a significant demographic of Aboriginal people looking for work. Access to appropriate education and training opportunities will be critical.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

An inclusive community that celebrates diversity is an essential component of a socially sustainable community. This will not eventuate unless government policies and programs delivered and/or funded by government are culturally and linguistically responsive.

Australia is a multicultural nation, as the 1996 census figures show. Two per cent of the Australian community are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 22% of Australians were born overseas and 19.1% have at least one parent born overseas.

With the current uncertain global situation, a Western Australian approach to sustainability which is built upon respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is essential. The public policy of multiculturalism, which has been adopted by the Commonwealth and all states and territories of Australia to address cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, is yet to achieve its policy objectives. The Ethnic Communities Council of WA has consistently argued that a one-size-fits-all, 'mainstreaming' approach to social policy and programs is woefully inadequate to address the state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

Currently there is limited legal protection in Australia for human rights under the constitution or under statute law. Australia is now the only country with a common law tradition not to have a bill of rights incorporated into its constitution or into a statute[20].

Recommendations

Recommendation 20   Sustainable Aboriginal communities

To meet the commitment to an effective and sustainable partnership with Aboriginal communities, the Government of Western Australia will need to:
▪ recognise the continuing rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal people as the

---

[20] Yencken, D. & Porter, L. (2001) *A Just and Sustainable Australia*. The Australian Collaboration: A collaboration of national community organisations, p 84.

first peoples of Western Australia, including traditional ownership and connection to land and waters;

- provide legislative protection of Aboriginal rights;

- ensure equity with respect to citizenship entitlements;

- apply regional and local approaches to address issues that impact on Aboriginal communities, families and individuals;

- maintain their commitment to democratic processes and structures;

- ensure inclusiveness;

- address issues arising from past acts of displacement;

- provide Aboriginal Cross-Cultural Awareness Training for all Western Australian public sector employees;

- negotiate separate agreements in health, housing, essential services, native title, justice and other areas that impact on Aboriginal people in this state;

- resource programs that improve governance, capacity building and economic independence; and

- work with industry and the private sector to enter into agreements with Aboriginal people.

These partnerships will be effective and sustainable where they are:

- based on integrated planning, shared responsibility and accountability of outcomes;

- formalised through agreement;

- based on realistic and measurable outcomes supported by agreed benchmarks and targets;

- clear in terms of the roles, responsibilities and liabilities of the parties; and

- inclusive of an agreed accountability process to monitor negotiations and outcomes from agreements.
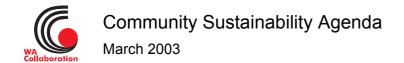
Recommendation 21   A framework for human rights in Western Australia

A just and sustainable Western Australia must be based upon a sound human rights framework. The State Government should adopt a human rights framework and incorporate it into state legislation. Such a framework should encompass the following:

- acknowledge the inalienable right to land of Aboriginal people and ensure just economic outcomes;

- acknowledge past wrongs and provide for just reparation (including provisions of the original WA Constitution);

- introduce an Aboriginal Land Act, in consultation with Aboriginal people;

- clear acceptance of international obligations by Western Australia and other state, territory and Commonwealth governments in addressing Aboriginal issues;

- clear acceptance of international obligations in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, including their right to appeal;

- equitable access to legal representation for all Western Australians;

- development of a comprehensive, integrated Anti-Racism Strategy;

- replacement of the traditional one-size-fits-all, 'mainstreaming' approach to social policy and programs with one that acknowledges, respects and effectively responds to the state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; and

- introduction of a bill of rights which is incorporated into the state constitution and lobby for a similar provision at the national level.

CROSS-DIMENSIONAL TOPICS

7. Global Sustainability

In order to move towards sustainability, we need to understand and work within the global context of sustainability. Doing justice to the complexity of the global sustainability situation is clearly impossible in such a short document, however, this section highlights some of the key issues.

All of humanity depends on the clean air and water that circulates around the planet, through our shared resources such as the atmosphere, oceans and shared ecosystems. These shared resources can only be managed sustainably on the basis of common purpose and international cooperation. In a fundamental sense, therefore, all humans are interdependent.

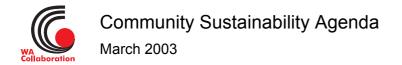### Global Environmental Challenges

Scientific research is leading to a growing concern about the ever-increasing human modification of the global environment, including climate change and other factors. "The basic goods and services supplied by the planetary life support system, such as food, water, clean air and environment conducive to human health, are being affected increasingly by global change."[21]

Recently a collaboration of a number of international scientific research programs concluded that:

> . . . Human activities are significantly influencing Earth's environment in many ways in addition to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Anthropogenic changes to Earth's land surface, oceans, coasts and atmosphere and to biological diversity, the water cycle and biogeochemical cycles are clearly identifiable beyond natural variability . . . Global change is real and is happening *now* . . . The accelerating human transformation of the Earth's environment is not sustainable . . .[22]

---

[21] The Amsterdam Declaration (2001) drafted by the leadership of four international global change research programs (International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP), International Human Dimensions Program on Global Environmental Change (IHDP), World Climate Research Program (WCRP) and the international biodiversity program DIVERSITAS,and formally endorsed by a strong majority of the conference participants at the 'Challenges of a Changing Earth: A Global Change Open Science Conference', 10-13 July 2001, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Accessed from the internet on 22 October 2001 at http://www.sciconf.igbp.kva.se/fr/html
[22] The Amsterdam Declaration (2001) op cit.

Global Social and Economic Challenges

Extreme poverty is experienced by one out of every five persons in the developing world. More than 1.3 billion people in 1993 were living on less than US$1 per day.[23] "The social ills associated with poverty are on the rise in many countries with high rates of poverty. These include disease, family breakdown, endemic crime and the use of narcotic drugs."[24]

Under-nourishment is also a major problem. Even though the current global food production is sufficient to meet overall human needs, some 800 million people remain under-nourished because of the inadequate distribution of economic wealth, and the implications of that for inadequate distribution of food.

The social fabric and productive capacity of some countries are also severely eroded by serious diseases such as HIV-AIDS and malaria.[25]

Many countries are struggling from a combination of factors including heavy external debt burdens, unequal power in international trade negotiations and rules, violent conflict, corruption, and lack of wealth to fund infrastructure, service provision and other government programs.

In addition, Australia's immigration policies need to be considered of in the context of the sustainability agenda, including the implications both domestically and abroad. The focus of such consideration should include:

- fulfillment of Australia's international human rights obligations and a more equitable sharing of the burden of alleviating the suffering of displaced people;

- a far greater emphasis on family migration; and

- the rejection of over reliance on immigration as a means to supplying skilled labour, particularly at the cost of depriving Australian citizens and permanent residents of the opportunities to acquire the skills in demand.

Population and Consumption

All of the challenges mentioned are compounded by the fact that the world's population is still growing. "Ninety-seven percent of the estimated increase of 2 billion in people over the next 20 years will live in the developing world."[26]

Currently the high-consumption, developed economies such as Australia use a far greater share of the world resources, and cause a much greater level of environmental degradation and pollution than less developed economies. The

---

[23] UNDP (1999) *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Programme, New York.
[24] OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p. 8.
[25] OECD &UNDP, op. cit.
[26] OECD &UNDP, op. cit.

lifestyles that developed countries lead contribute to the harsh conditions experienced by people in developed countries.

A global perspective would mean that we in Western Australia ensure that we do not simply move our environmental, social or economic problems to locations outside the state. As the population of the low consuming, less developed countries follow the same developmental paths as the developed countries have taken, the social, economic and environmental pressures will grow and the challenges of moving towards sustainability will become greater. Alternative pathways for development are needed for developing countries, while at the same time developed countries must reduce their demands on world resources.

All of these considerations need to be part of the context when we determine our sustainability agenda and the objectives and targets to guide its implementation.

Approaching Global Sustainability

Some important aspects of how we in Western Australia interact with the rest of the world are mediated through the federal Australian Government. International and multinational agreements and conventions and the United Nations and its programs all play important roles and are the responsibility of the federal government. Another important aspect of sustainability, therefore, should be how the Western Australian Government influences the Australian Government towards appropriate policies and programs, both domestic and foreign.

One example is Australia's provision of overseas aid and development programs. Australia's goal has been to spend 1% of its Gross National Product (GNP) on such programs, however, we have never reached that target. According to the Australian Council for Overseas Aid: "Australia's Official Development Assistance, as measured against internationally agreed benchmarks, has been in decline for nearly 30 years from its high point of 0.5% of GNP."[27] Since 1995/96, aid as a proportion of GNP has dropped from 0.32% to 0.25%. This is not sufficient.

Recommendations

Recommendation 22   Western Australian Council of Overseas Aid and Development

Establish a Western Australian Council of Overseas Aid and Development, consisting of charities working in this area, relevant State Government portfolios (for example, Commerce and Trade, Education and Training) and universities to:

- coordinate local initiatives in overseas aid and development;

---

[27] Australian Council for Overseas Aid (2002) *Aid Budget 2002-03 Overview and Analysis; ACFOA's response to the Australian Federal Budget*. Accessed on the internet on 9 February 2003 at http://www.acfoa.asn.au

- coordinate state agency programs with aid and development programs;

- coordinate State Government assistance to charities working on overseas aid and development; and

- develop a plan for responses to overseas emergencies that will assist in more coordinated responses from Western Australian organisations.

Recommendation 23   Australia's contribution to overseas aid programs

The Western Australian Government should strongly urge the Australian Commonwealth Government to increase Australia's contribution to overseas aid and development programs to a level equivalent to at least 1% of Australia's GNP.

Recommendation 24   Western Australian commitment to international treaties

The Western Australian Government should commit Western Australia to complying with the regime of international environmental initiatives (for example, Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Local Agenda 21, Kyoto Protocol, Convention on Biological Diversity [which includes protection of traditional knowledge] and international social and human rights initiatives [for example, UN declarations on Human Rights and Rights of the Child, Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination]). Such a commitment should inform the State Sustainability Strategy and all future policy work and decision-making.

Further, the Western Australian Government should urge the Australian Commonwealth Government to make the same commitments.

8. Governance and Processes for Sustainability

The goal of sustainability is best thought of as a path, where we know roughly the right direction, but we don't know enough to know all the details of a final destination. It is not possible to set out in complete detail a final strategy for sustainability that won't soon become outdated as our understanding evolves and circumstances change.

The first priority for any government strategy for sustainability should be to establish the governance structures, institutional arrangements and processes that can drive the state's sustainability agenda into the future. If core sustainability institutional reforms can be identified and implemented, the finer details of implementing the sustainability agenda can be developed and guided through these institutional reforms.

If the governance, process and institutional reform aspects of the sustainability agenda are not strong and effective, it will be impossible for the State

Government to continue to drive the transformation of Western Australia towards sustainability.

Participatory Institutions for Sustainability

As discussed in Section 1 'Community and Sustainability', the process of engaging the Western Australian community in the creation of a just and sustainable future for our state will undoubtedly be a complex but essential process. 'The community' is a complex combination of many different communities (for example, geographical, interest, cultural), each requiring a different strategy of engagement.

Any future institutional arrangements for sustainability in Western Australia must be established on the following principles.

1. **Inclusivity** — with decision-making structures established to achieve the sustainability agenda and provide for gender balance and representation of ethnic and Aboriginal people and disabled people.

2. **Appropriate scale** — processes must be practical for communities and at a level that people can relate to (which might be Local Government, catchment level or regional).

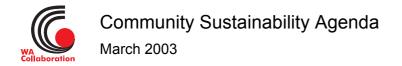3. Underpinned by **adequate community access** to information, knowledge and expertise.

Institutionalising Sustainability

There is a need to foster a whole of government approach to sustainability, including the development of a cross-agency culture that understands and recognises the importance of sustainability, and places priority on striving to achieve it. This approach has already been adopted in partnership with Aboriginal communities under the Statement of Commitment and as evidenced by the State Government's response to the Gordon Inquiry.

Attention needs to be paid to how to achieve such a whole of government approach. It will take time and concerted effort. Recommendation 29 which would impose requirements on government agencies to develop sustainability policies, targets, indicators, and report regularly on them, will assist in this but won't be enough. The State Government will need to ensure that agencies have sufficient capacity and support to meet these requirements and to integrate sustainability considerations into the full range of operations and policies.

Legislating for sustainability is also important and has three core functions.

1. To enshrine sustainability principles for guidance in implementing legislation.

2. To establish major institutional reforms to support and drive the sustainability agenda.

3.   To provide legislative backing for major sustainability initiatives in a wide range of sectors.

The Role of Local Government

Local Government has a crucial role to play in the creation of a just and sustainable future for Western Australia. There are a number of Local Governments which are already leading the way with Local Agenda 21 and other local sustainability initiatives. Maximising this potential will require greater support from state and Commonwealth Governments, and increased pressure from the community on their local authorities.

Information for Sustainability

Institutional structures for sustainability must be supported by effective 'informing systems'[28] for sustainability. There are many examples of tools that can be used to help inform environmental aspects of sustainability, such as State of the Environment reporting and ecological footprint analysis.

Sustainability indicators or quality of life indicators or genuine progress indicators are also potential tools which can reflect a more integrated (across social and environmental) approach to sustainability.

---

[28] Venning, J. & Higgins, J. (2001) *Towards Sustainability: Emerging Systems for Informing Sustainable Development*. UNSW Press, Sydney; Connor, R.D. & Dovers, S.R. (2002) *Institutional Change and Learning for Sustainable Development*. Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies Working Paper 2002/1, CRES, Australian National University, Canberra.

Recommendations

Recommendation 25   Sustainability Commission

Establish an independent statutory authority, a 'Sustainability Commission', that is representative of government, industry and the community, with the following terms of reference:

 a) to provide advice and assistance to the State Government, and report to the State Parliament on moving towards sustainability, including regular reviews and refinements of a State Sustainability Strategy;

 b) to coordinate implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy, and other relevant efforts towards achieving sustainability;

 c) to publicly advocate for and actively promote sustainability;

 d) to report, at least annually, on progress towards sustainability across government, the community and private sectors;

 e) to establish sustainability indicator systems that are clear and accessible and that enable government and the community to gauge progress across the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. Establish the ongoing measurement, collation and reporting of the associated indicators and their implications at least annually to State Parliament and the broader community;

 f) to investigate and research progress towards sustainability, and how this can be best achieved;

 g) to audit the performance of State Government agencies, authorities, and publicly owned corporatised organisations, against their respective sustainability policies and objectives, and report to State Parliament on these audits (see Recommendation 29 for more detail); and

 h) to coordinate education programs for primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education sectors and the general community to support the Sustainability agenda.

It is recommended that the proposed Sustainability Commission:

 i) should be established through the passing of a Sustainability Act;

 ii) the Commission would be required to report to both the Premier (or Minister for Sustainability) and to State Parliament;

 iii) should have at least three full time Commissioners with an appropriate range of expertise taking into account the Commission's terms of reference;

 iv) should receive its own budget adequate to fulfil all of its legislative responsibilities; and

 v) should receive administrative support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Recommendation 26   Sustainability Act

Establish a 'Sustainability Act' that provides for a Sustainability Commission, the powers it would require and the terms of reference as set out in Recommendation 25 above.

Recommendation 27   Ongoing review of institutional reform

Both the State Sustainability Strategy and the Sustainability Commission should identify processes for ongoing review and exploration of what institutional reforms would best support the Sustainability Agenda. This would include, but not be constrained to, institutional structures.

Recommendation 28   Comprehensive legislative review

The Department of Premier and Cabinet should undertake a comprehensive legislative review of all state legislation for consistency with sustainability principles and objectives.

A precedent for such a comprehensive legislative review has been provided in Australia by the National Competition Policy legislative review process. Lessons of how and how not to undertake such a review can be learnt from that process.

The review would:

- identify whether existing and proposed legislation is or is not consistent with the State Government's sustainability agenda, and recommend amendments where necessary;

- make recommendations on how to optimise legislative support for the sustainability agenda;

- insert sustainability objects clauses in key pieces of legislation as soon as possible;

- perform a case by case analysis of how legislation may need to be amended, repealed and replaced to support the sustainability agenda; and

- involve all decision-makers and policy makers, including The Law Reform Commission and the Sustainability Commission.

As this review would take a number of years to complete, it will be necessary to set out a timetable for the review process. For example, a target could be set of reviewing the first ten highest priority pieces of legislation within three years. The review would also benefit from a process for determining the prioritising of the review's agenda, including what laws to assess and in what sequence, and when found, which legal deficiencies to address and in what sequence.

Recommendation 29   State Government's role in implementing sustainability

All State Government agencies should be required to establish:

- sustainability policies and objectives that are consistent with an agreed sustainability framework; and

- sustainability indicators to measure progress in implementing these policies, and achieving the objectives.

Departments and agencies should be required to report annually to the Sustainability Commission and to State Parliament on their progress. The Sustainability Commission would then audit the agencies' annual sustainability reports, and the performance of the agencies against their own policies and objectives.

In this regard the Sustainability Commission would be fulfilling a role similar (and complementary) to the role the Auditor General plays with respect to financial reporting and performance of government agencies. The requirements of this recommendation need legislative support, and could be included in the Sustainability Act. These requirements would of course also be placed on the Department of Treasury.

Recommendation 30   State budget reflects Sustainability Strategy

The State Government should ensure coherence between state budgets and sustainability strategy priorities. "The Strategy needs to be fully integrated into the budget mechanism to ensure that plans have the financial resources to achieve their objectives, and do not only represent 'wish lists'. Conversely, the formulation of budgets must be informed by a clear identification of priorities"[29]. This will take many budget cycles to achieve and will need to be done incrementally.

Recommendation 31   Sustainability assessments

The State Government should develop processes for performing sustainability assessments on all significant new and existing policies, programs, legislation and proposals. Sustainability assessment should be integrated assessment, and integration can be considered in four different ways:

- vertical integration, meaning that policies are established within a sustainability framework, the plans and programmes are developed out of this, and then finally projects. Therefore, there is a 'trickle-down effect' which should make assessing the projects simpler;

---

[29] OECD & UNDP, op. cit., p 33.

- horizontal integration, meaning that social, environmental and economic factors are considered together, not just at the same time;

- integration into decision-making, meaning that the assessment process should be conducted at many points during the development of the policy, program or plan; and

- integration of different views and value frameworks into the assessment process.

Recommendation 32   Sustainability indicator systems

Establish sustainability indicator systems that are clear and accessible and that enable government and the community to gauge progress across the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. Establish the ongoing measurement, collation and reporting of the associated indicators and their implications, at least annually, to State Parliament and the broader community.

Recommendation 33   Role of Local Government

The WA Collaboration supports a greater partnership approach between State and Local Government for sustainability to:

- provide more consistency in the approach taken by Local and State Government, without stifling the ability for local solutions to local problems;

- provide greater support and resources for Local Government to take on a much greater role in sustainability; and

- ensure Local Government sustainability initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 move out of the purely environmental dimension, and are supported to draw upon the community development and economic development resources of Local Governments.

Recommendation 34   Aboriginal Governance and Capacity Building Institute

International research has demonstrated that the one of the key factors in sustainable and economically independent Aboriginal communities is the development of culturally appropriate institutions of self-government. The Western Australian Government has committed to working with Aboriginal communities to build their capacity, governance and leadership. The State Government should fund the establishment of an Aboriginal Governance and Capacity Building Institute.

The role of the unit would be:

- research and development in preparation for comprehensive regional agreement negotiations (scoping), capacity building and facilitation of Aboriginal governance development;

- assistance to organisations and communities in mediating intra-Aboriginal disputes, or conflict with development or other non Aboriginal interests;

- assistance to Aboriginal parties when negotiating specific resource development agreements; and

- partnerships with industry to do with governance or leadership development.

9. Sustainability at a Regional Level

A 'regional' approach to sustainability is inextricable from the participatory approach to sustainability advocated by the WA Collaboration. 'Regional' refers to an appropriate scale at which to approach sustainability, as well as to 'outside the metropolitan area'.

In a state as large and diverse as Western Australia, a regional approach to sustainability is essential to make it meaningful. Sustainability requires a top-down approach through state-level policy and institutional structures, but also a bottom-up approach which is localised, identifies and builds on local strengths and local people, and has local acceptance an support.

Current Centralised Decision-making and Financial Flows

The centralised decision-making of state and federal governments and the flow of royalties out of regional areas is of great concern to communities outside the metropolitan area.
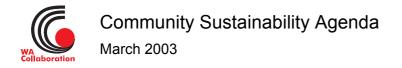
People outside the metropolitan area are frustrated that even where government departments have regional offices, the staff in those offices rarely have decision-making powers and most decisions have to be referred back to central offices. Yet, often for efficiency, accountability and achieving coherence of policy, central decision-making may be necessary.

The challenge is to find the right balance of delegation of decision-making while ensuring that genuine and effective public participation for regional communities can occur for both centralised and decentralised policy decision-making. The subsidiarity principle — that decisions should be made by the communities affected, or on their behalf, by authorities closest to them — is one that should be considered and applied wherever practical.

Regional Coordination and Planning

At a regional level there are a large number of organisations that are essential partners in a regional approach to sustainability. For example:

- Local Government;
- Regional Councils of Local Government;
- Regional Development Commissions;
- State Government departments;
- Area Consultative Committees;
- Regional Natural Resource Management Councils (such as Avon Catchment Council; South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team); and

▪ Non-government organisations.

A meaningful approach to sustainability at a regional level will be based around a cooperative approach to regional planning amongst all of these key stakeholders.

This may not necessarily be best achieved through the immediate development of another Strategy. Rather, it requires an approach which coordinates amongst existing regional bodies and their programs.

Regional Institutional Structures for Sustainability

Any endeavour for undertaking sustainability at a regional level has to be supported by some form of institutional arrangement and resources. While there is a potential role for the Regional Development Commissions, the background and current mandate of these organisations is still primarily economic development. It is likely to take more than simply 'adding on' sustainability principles to the work of these Commissions to enable them to be regional leaders in sustainability.

Some Regional Development Commissions have begun examining their role in sustainability, for example, the Peel Development Commission has already adopted a sustainable development strategy and plan.

Appropriate Regional Scales

Any discussion of 'regions' is complicated by the many different regional boundaries that exist for different levels of government, different government departments and for different purposes. There are also different scales of regional organisation that are appropriate for different issues and purposes.

Finding the most appropriate scales for dealing with sustainability and ensuring this scale is meaningful for the regional community will be a major challenge.

Recommendations

Recommendation 35   Regional forums for sustainability

As a precursor to development of Regional Sustainability Strategies and to maximise the extent to which current programs and funding can be reoriented towards sustainability, the State Government should first develop regular open forums or roundtables at a regional level that bring together the major stakeholders to build partnerships and to network and coordinate across sectors. The relevant stakeholders are likely to include:

- o Local Government
- o Relevant State Government departments
- o Commonwealth Area Consultative Committees
- o Regional Natural Resource Management Councils
- o Equal representation of non-government and community

organisations (or relevant structures such as WACOSS[30] South West or Mid West Network)

- o General community representatives
- o Local business and industry

These forums must be adequately resourced and supported by State Government and organised through the Regional Development Commissions in the interim, pending the review of the structure of Regional Development Commissions (see Recommendation 36).

Recommendation 36   Role of the Regional Development Commissions

The State Government should thoroughly investigate the potential for restructuring the Regional Development Commissions to encompass sustainability. This needs to be more substantial than a token addition of sustainability principles and functions. It is likely that a comprehensive review of the role and performance of the Regional Development Commissions will be required.

Recommendation 37   Regional support for NGO sector

The State Government through the various Regional Development Commissions should support the establishment of not-for–profit community service networks in the regions as a means to capacity build community services in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation 38   Aboriginal regional agreements

The Statement of Commitment provides for the development of comprehensive regional and local agreements according to the priorities of Aboriginal people in partnership with other stakeholders. The development of appropriate local agreements should be actively pursued.

---

[30] WACOSS = WA Council of Social Services

10. Settlements and Sustainability

Ensuring Western Australia's settlements are sustainable into the future was a major theme throughout the WA Collaboration process. Sustainability in settlements requires urban development and urban design to be sustainable from both a physical environmental and a socially equitable perspective.

Most of the issues outlined in this section have clear social, environmental and economic dimensions. The sustainability of settlements is not only the result of planning and physical infrastructure. It is also about sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles, and the processes for building and supporting socially sustainable communities.

For most participants, ensuring settlements are sustainable into the future will require a much greater level of participation in urban and rural planning processes.

Housing

As WACOSS concluded from its study of Social Sustainability: "Housing plays a significant role in supporting connections between people (as part of planning and physical infrastructure) as well as being one of the most important factors in people's levels of poverty or wealth."[31] Housing is also a key factor in people's sense of empowerment, responsibility and safety in the community, and in creating a community inclusive of diverse groups.

At the same time, the design of housing and buildings in Western Australia can have major impacts on resource use, and therefore environmental impacts as well as costs for households. Particularly in places with extreme climatic conditions, such as the Kimberley and the Pilbara, the WA Collaboration workshops noted the extent to which houses and other buildings are not currently designed in a climate sensitive or ecologically sustainable way. In the Kimberley, ATSIC and the Office of Energy are working with the Australian Greenhouse Office to design housing and facilities for new communities and outstations that use only available renewable energy. This model could be adapted for other remote areas.

Population and Regionalisation

Throughout Western Australia there are two opposing forces relating to sustainable settlements. In Perth and major regional centres, there are concerns about the impact of population growth, both the potential for growth to outstrip environmental carrying capacity and the impacts of potentially rapid social change on communities. At the same time, many rural communities are facing a

---

[31] Barron & Gauntlett (2002) Ibid., p 17.

loss of services and shrinking towns, and are looking at ways to increase population and development.

Western Australia lacks a suitable regionalisation policy that can effectively address the challenges these forces present, such as the ability of towns to provide adequate services and the centralisation of major services in a few major centres over such a large state. Sections 9 and 11 ('Sustainability at a Regional Level' and 'Services and Sustainability') discuss other issues relevant to regionalisation.

Transport

The provision of adequate public transport emerged as a key issue in most of the Regional Sustainability Workshops, both in the metropolitan area and in regional towns. There are obvious environmental impacts of transport, but also important social and equity considerations for lower income earners. Some regional participants felt that their needs for public transport were being neglected in favour of the transport requirements of Perth and other major regional centres.

Sustainable Consumption Patterns and Lifestyles

We must all take personal responsibility for contributing to the shift towards sustainability by doing what we can in our individual lives to live more sustainably. Our lifestyles and consumption patterns help shape our settlements and the environmental impacts to which we personally contribute. Considering what each of us can do and determining how we can support each other in those efforts is an important part of the sustainability agenda.

Recommendations

Recommendation 39   Public housing

The State Government should lobby the Commonwealth Government to increase their annual commitment to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement, in order to arrest the decline in funding over the last decade and to respond to increasing unmet housing need and the needs of 28 000 Western Australian households now spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

Further funding needs to be directed towards the State Homeless Strategy, increasing public housing stock and implementing housing related recommendations of the Gordon Inquiry.

Recommendation 40   State Housing Strategy

The State Housing Strategy should develop targets for social housing stock, both as absolute numbers and relative to total housing stock. Financial modelling should be undertaken to identify the amount of funding required and a funding strategy should be developed to achieve these targets.

Recommendation 41   Housing and planning

The State Government should expand the current range of incentives to encourage environmentally sustainable housing. Incentives should be provided to encourage sustainable outcomes from housing developments, redevelopments and house renovations, for example, energy efficient appliances, environmentally preferred building materials, solar orientation.

Recommendation 42   Managing urban growth

The State Government should establish urban growth boundaries to contain urban sprawl and focus urban development in areas that have been agreed upon in participatory planning processes.

Such a program must be combined with:

- an appropriate affordable housing strategy to ensure the social impacts of such a planning policy are not focused on the people who can least afford it; and

- a Regionalisation Policy which maximises opportunities for future sustainable urban development outside the Perth metropolitan area.

Such a program will assist in:

- reducing transport costs and associated energy consumption and air pollution;

- reducing costs of infrastructure, utility service provision and welfare service provision;

- reducing the destruction of bushland and wetland environments surrounding our urban centres; and

- protecting the quality of our strategic drinking water supply sources.

11. Services and Sustainability

There are a broad range of essential services that are provided to the community, including:

- welfare services;
- advocacy services;
- legal services;
- health care;
- education and training opportunities;
- recreational facilities;
- transport;
- energy; and
- information technology.

These services are provided by different levels of government, private enterprises and, to an increasing extent, non-government or not-for-profit organisations.

All of these services are integral aspects of a sustainable community, but across Western Australia there is unequal access to many of them, particularly in Aboriginal communities, amongst ethnic and religious minorities, rural and remote areas of Western Australia, and in the outer suburbs of Perth.

In their research, WACOSS found that the provision of appropriate and accessible services was one of four fundamental issues for social sustainability. The study concluded that: "Service provision mediates poverty and was also identified as being an important factor in people's quality of life and in creating equity, interconnectedness and democracy."[32]

Service provision has obvious major implications for the use of natural resources and the environmental impacts of different services. In addition, the economic costs of that provision, how is it funded, and how those costs are shared in the community are also important factors for consideration.

The future of service provision within a sustainability framework presents some challenges and tensions for policy making. How can services be optimally delivered when considered in a sustainability framework? Will additional resources need to be allocated to meet the policy objectives? How can appropriate and enforceable community service obligations be put in place to ensure that sustainability policy objectives are met?

---

[32] Barron & Gauntlett (2002) ibid., p 17.

The Role of the Non-Government Sector

The non-government, not-for-profit sector plays a vital role in the provision of community services. Across Australia, NGO community service organisations delivered almost 60% of the total expenditure on welfare in 1997/98 and volunteers added over $1 billion extra[33].

> More and more is asked of our community organisations — but investment in community capacity is declining . . . In the face of rising disadvantage, poverty and inequality, tight government fiscal policies and devolution of government services from the public to the private and community sectors, increasing pressure is being placed on community organisations.[34]

Similarly, in Western Australia, there is a large number of voluntary, not-for-profit community environmental and 'care' groups providing on-ground environmental management and rehabilitation.

In both of these major areas of voluntary work by the not-for-profit-sector, the organisations are often dependent on government funding, making it increasingly difficult to be fearless critics of deficiencies in government policy.[35] In some cases, governments might also feel uncomfortable with these organisations taking on a greater advocacy role, and may find ways to undermine them and their services.

Sustaining the non-government, not-for-profit and voluntary sector into the future, without constraining their important advocacy role, will be critical for a just and sustainable Western Australia.

Recommendations

Recommendation 43   Sustainability of utility services

All future publicly funded utility strategies, policies and decision-making processes should incorporate sustainability assessments. These sustainability assessments should include full life cycle assessments[36] and culturally and linguistically appropriate social impact assessments for the various options for proposed utility service provision.

Further, the principles of 'integrated resource planning' (as set out in the State Government's Draft State Water Conservation Strategy 2002) should be adapted and integrated into policy development and planning processes for all utility service provision. These principles make it possible to compare on an equal footing

---

[33] Yencken & Porter (2001), op cit. p 50.
[34] Yencken & Porter (2001), op cit. p 50.
[35] Yencken & Porter (2001), op cit. p 50.
[36] For explanation of Life Cycle Assessments, see Footnote 19 in Section 5. Economic Means to Sustainability.

options that reduce demand for utility services with options that increase provision of services. Such comparisons consider the total costs and benefits to the utility service provider, the customers and the general community, rather than just considering the perspective of the utility service provider. Thus the costs and benefits to the broader community of the various options are more appropriately taken into account in the decision-making processes.

Recommendation 44   Access to utility services

In recognition of the essential nature of the services provided by utilities, the State Government should:

- implement a 'Utilities Assistance Scheme' for Health Care Card and Pensioner Concession Card Holders consistent with the Victorian Utilities Relief Scheme. The Scheme would operate in addition to existing concessions and rebates and assist those most vulnerable to disconnections;
- implement a 'Customer Service Code' (to be included in the licences of all utilities) to ensure protection of all consumers, particularly in relation to utility credit control practices;
- ensure that incentives and rebates related to utilities services are directed specifically at low income earners; and
- ensure that Aboriginal citizens throughout the state have equitable access to essential services like power and water.
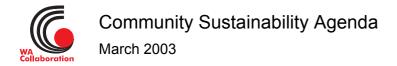
Recommendation 45   Access to transport services

In recognition of the critical importance of transport services, the State Government should review the full range of publicly funded transport services and policies, taking into account the role of each mode of transport in terms of sustainability, and the short and long term pricing policies. Key objectives of the review should be to achieve:

- equitable access to transport services (including not increasing concession fares for public transport);
- promotion of sustainable transport use patterns (including reducing use of motor vehicles and reducing greenhouse gas emissions);
- improve efficiency, reach and affordability of public transport;
- reducing the need for transport (through better planning); and
- favour the use of fuel-efficient cars and, in general, increase the cost of private cars relative to the cost of public transport.

Recommendation 46   Energy

Key challenges include making greater use of renewable and energy efficient technologies, appliances and practices, and reducing our energy consumption

per capita. The State Government should

- include requirements on energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in the building code (for example, passive solar utilisation, insulation, appliances, compulsory energy rating).; and

- develop innovative financing solutions for energy efficient and renewable energy appliances (such as leasing schemes, sharing of costs and benefits between landlords and tenants, low interest loans).

Recommendation 47   Community legal services

The legal rights and access to justice of those who are most vulnerable in our community must be protected.

Additional funds must be provided to expand the level of community legal services in Western Australia. Funding should be linked to the findings of and the proposals arising out of the review of legal services currently being undertaken by the State and Commonwealth Governments in Western Australia.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE WA COLLABORATION

The **Vision** for the WA Collaboration is: A just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

The **Mission** Statement for the WA Collaboration is to achieve genuine environmental, social and economic progress in Western Australia by enabling the Western Australian community to meaningfully participate in policy development, agenda setting, planning and realisation of policies, practices and initiatives.

The WA Collaboration will do this by:

1. Providing a network and forum that meets regularly in order to:
   - focus on specific issues relating to sustainability, to find the common ground and explore the difference and diversity in Western Australia's communities and regions; and
   - facilitate practical opportunities to further sustainability within each organisation.

2. Broadening community involvement for a just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

3. Fostering the development of a 'community sustainability agenda' by:
   - initially, coordinating broad community consultation on opportunities for sustainability (including the State Sustainability Strategy) through regional workshops and a Sustainability Summit; and
   - building on the consultation outcomes to develop a 'community sustainability agenda' and respond to the State Sustainability Strategy.

4. Advocating strongly for the 'community sustainability agenda' with the State Government and Local Governments.

5. Respecting the different values and different positions amongst the WA Collaboration participants.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* is the result of the work undertaken by the WA Collaboration between September 2002 and February 2003. Approximately 350 participants took part in discussions around Western Australia and at the Sustainability Summit in February 2003.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* is the WA Collaboration's first step in identifying a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainability in Western Australia across the social and environmental perspectives of the community and non-government sector.

The *Community Sustainability Agenda* outlines the WA Collaboration's priority recommendations for creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia. It is designed to influence the State Sustainability Strategy and the Western Australian Government, as well as to encourage additional and ongoing support for the sustainability agenda from all WA Collaboration members and their stakeholders.

A major role for the future of the WA Collaboration will be to build on the *Community Sustainability Agenda* by raising awareness throughout the broader community on the next steps to creating a just and sustainable future for Western Australia.

REFERENCES

ACTU (1991) *ACTU 1991 Congress Environment and Sustainable Development Policy*. Accessed from the internet on 29 January 2003 at http://www.actu.asn.au

Australian Council for Overseas Aid (2002) *Aid Budget 2002-03 Overview and Analysis; ACFOA's response to the Australian Federal Budget*. Accessed on the internet on 9 February 2003 at http://www.acfoa.asn.au

Australian State of the Environment Committee (2002) *Australia: State of the Environment 2001 Main Report*, CSIRO Publishing on behalf of Department of the Environment and Heritage, Commonwealth of Australia, Collingwood.

Barron, L. & Gauntlett, E. (2002) *Model of Social Sustainability, Stage 1 Report Housing and Sustainable Communities Indicators Project*, WA Council of Social Services, Perth.

Connor, R.D. & Dovers, S.R. (2002) *Institutional Change and Learning for Sustainable Development*. Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies Working Paper 2002/1, CRES, Australian National University, Canberra.

Davison, A. (2002) *Sustainability: The ability to sustain "the good"*, Submission to the State Sustainability Strategy, on CD-ROM, "Focus on the Future", Government of Western Australia, Perth.

Environmental Protection Authority (2002) *Towards Sustainability*, Preliminary Position Statement No. 6, Perth, EPA, p. 21.

Government of Western Australia (1998) *Environment Western Australia 1998: State of the Environment*. Department of Environmental Protection, Perth, p. 15.

OECD & UNDP (2002) *Sustainable Development Strategies: A Resource Book*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Development Program, New York, p. 33.

State of the Environment Advisory Committee (1996), *State of the Environment Australia*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood.

The Amsterdam Declaration (2001), '*Challenges of a Changing Earth: A Global Change Open Science Conference*', 10-13 July 2001, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Accessed from the internet on 22 October 2001 at http://www.sciconf.igbp.kva.se/fr/html

UNDP (1999) *Human Development Report*. United Nations Development Programme, New York.

Venning, J. & Higgins, J. (2001) *Towards Sustainability: Emerging Systems for Informing Sustainable Development*. UNSW Press, Sydney.

Wackernagel, M. & Rees, W. (1996) *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.

WA Collaboration, Kununurra Regional Workshop, 16 November 2002. See workshop reports on the internet at www.wacollaboration.org.au

Water and Rivers Commission (2002) *State Water Conservation Strategy* (Western Australia). Water and Rivers Commission, Perth.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1990) *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*, Commission for the Future Australian Edition, Oxford University Press Australia, Melbourne.

Yencken, D. & Porter, L. (2001) *A Just and Sustainable Australia*. The Australian Collaboration: Acollaboration of national community organisations, p. 84, Melbourne.