

6/53 Ramsdale St  
Doubleview 6018  
9244 3015

9 January 2003

Sustainability Policy Unit  
Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
197 St Georges Tce  
Perth WA 6000

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the copy of the Draft State Sustainability Strategy and the opportunity to comment on it. Having commented on the Consultation Paper we are impressed to see some of the content of the Draft Strategy even appearing in an 'official' document, and we commend those involved with its preparation for their work, which looks substantial.

### **Population**

We still think the document is soft on the population issue, which was the main point of my earlier submission, although it gets a better hearing than in the Consultation Paper. On p75, Section 4 it states that *the global population needs to stabilise, as a continuously growing population undermines sustainability*. This clear statement is an important contribution to the necessary debate. However pp75-79 give the impression that developing countries are most of the problem. A cynical interpretation of proposed actions 2.1-2.4 on p79 could be that the global population problem is just a business opportunity for Australia.

Section 4 focuses on the global population issue, with reference to the WA situation in Part 6. We looked in vain for a clear discussion of carrying capacity. The opening section, 'Managing Urban and Regional Growth' spoke of redirecting growth from greenfields to brownfields sites (in itself a good idea). The section was short on dealing with rapid urban expansion, instead referring to 'redefining' or 'redirecting' growth. The argument here essentially defers to the *Future Perth* planning process.

The Sustainability Strategy should be much stronger on the issue of growth. The prevailing view within WA is still that population growth is good, bigger is better, and that (property) development is a right rather than a privilege. This view is driven by vested interests who will presumably powerfully impress their views in the production of *Future Perth*, and we will continue to get development which is environmentally damaging and resource intensive and pays no attention to sustainability issues.

The document is quiet on the broader issue of carrying capacity of our state. Population is a difficult issue as many in the community, because of their religious/cultural outlook, economic interests or plain ignorance of the nature of Australia, are not attracted to consider the carrying capacity of the state. However if it isn't addressed more clearly in this document, we can't see it happening elsewhere. This looks like an opportunity missed.

### **Oil Vulnerability**

It's great to see this included. However we feel the case for urgent action on this issue could have been made more strongly.

**Planning and Transportation**

We were impressed with much of pp 141-142 and 158-159. The significance of sense of place in building commitment to local communities and hence to their sustainability are points well made. The importance of social equity as a key component in planning for and achieving sustainability is appropriately highlighted.

**Sustainable energy**

The strategies listed are great. We especially like the focus on ultimately mandatory energy-efficient building codes. Much of what we see being built at present in the City of Stirling shows extreme disregard for energy conservation in design and presupposes airconditioning. For example, pseudo-Tuscan styles minimise eaves in order to cram in more units and seem to deny that we live in a hot climate.

**Final comment**

Although the document confronts the challenges ahead positively, it seems to me to lack a sense of urgency. It's good to be positive, as it is more empowering. However we are not in a situation where gradual, incremental change will work. Tim Flannery quotes CSIRO work which suggests that Australians need to reduce their demand on the environment by 60% to be living sustainably (New Scientist, 22 June, 2002, p44).

We look forward to finalisation of the Strategy, and to serious government action to implement it.

Yours sincerely

Peter Wilmot and Jan Knight