Submission on the

Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy: Consultation draft

I contend that the State Development and Planning Policy is flawed and reinforces the pressures of social and environmental unsustainability in the metro area and Southwards along the Swan Coastal Plain. This is because it is based on traditional planning/ thinking about where populations will live and also based on market forces. It doesn't take into account the impact on social and environmental conditions which people are expected to live with. There is a self-fulfilling prophesy in the type of planning policy that puts infrastructure into particular areas so of course the populations will go there. Therefore the policy was on track! **Therefore we will continue with this policy framework**. Look at the impacts of this State planning policy – short-sighted, inequitable distribution of State/local resources, densely populated areas requiring high servicing and use of natural and produced resources, unsustainable development and resource use, water use being a current issue.

There is a need to have alternative plans/policies – to look at other regional areas where infrastructure/industries can be supported and encouraged to grow to attract more families to live and work in them.

e.g. Currently in the areas east of the Darling scarp and the Midwest
A plan to build more infrastructure must be justified as economically viable and self supporting in
the future. Even if not immediately economically viable it will give better services/employment to
people in the community and attract others to come and live.

I suggest there are three components that need to be satisfied in any such plan: Social, Environmental and Economic –triple bottom line. Workers will not stay in a regional area that does not offer good schooling, medical and social/recreational opportunities for their families even if the job pays well. This infrastructure development is important if regional areas are to be developed enough to take the pressures off the metro and coastal plain areas.

Of course there is a need to accept at times, that there are life cycles of towns —if they cannot change and remain vibrant they may close down. But with a different State policy, some of these towns would not get to such a dire position before something positive can be done. If policies were put in place that encouraged self sustaining lifestyles in these towns and remote communities, and that provided incentives to explore new ways to retain and attract community members, infrastructure will be sustained and the drift to the city may be prevented, causing less pressure on resources/services etc.

Too much weight has been traditionally based on population trends, market forces and single (economic) bottom line - social and environmental impacts also need to be addressed.

And it should be ensured that what ever happens the local communities have input, are consulted and their local knowledge and expertise are transparently considered.

To conclude:

Any policies that do not address the accumulation of our population into one small corner of such a vast state is drastically lacking in imagination and foresight.

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