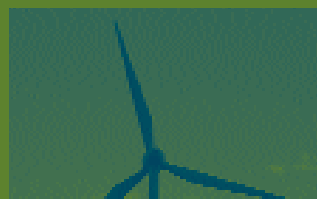


Focus on the future

The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy



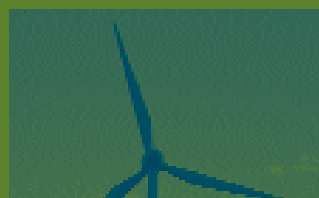
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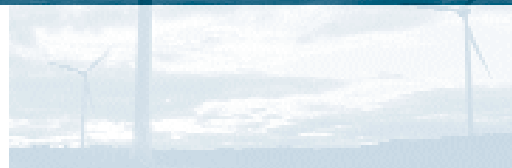
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Focus on the future

The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy



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An electronic copy of this publication,
together with the submissions,
background papers and seminar
proceedings that informed its
development are included on the
CD-ROM at the back of this document.

A poster showing the relationship
between elements of the proposed
sustainability framework is also inserted
within this document.

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Foreword



In December 2001, I initiated the process of delivering the Western Australian Government's election commitment to develop a sustainability strategy for Western Australia and invited interested community members, industry and government agencies to assist in the development of Australia's first comprehensive sustainability strategy at the state level. Since that time there has been great interest from Western Australians and others about this significant initiative.

The draft State Sustainability Strategy shows how we can meet the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement. It proposes new principles, approaches and actions to help us to achieve a more sustainable future. Clearly, sustainability is a concept that resonates-many people, government agencies and businesses now see this approach as the only way forward.

The transition to a sustainable future is a long-term agenda that requires rethinking the way we live, use resources, govern and do business. The draft Strategy challenges us to consider new ideas and to be innovative about the opportunities that are presented. The proposed actions in this draft Strategy aim to be implemented over the next five to ten years, though many could begin immediately. A number of partnership processes are outlined in this document and they will be crucial to the successful implementation of the final strategy.

More than ever before, the time is right for this important strategy. The debate at the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg has shown that integrating the environment, society and the economy remains an enormous challenge. Individuals, businesses and governments everywhere are searching for new approaches to development that contribute to environment and society now without degrading them over the longer term. Western Australia shares this aspiration and I am confident that we can achieve it and benefit from the opportunities that sustainability brings.

I am delighted with the genuine enthusiasm and support expressed by so many people for this initiative thus far. Many people attended seminars, wrote submissions and visited the *Sustainability WA* exhibit and this input has helped in preparing this draft Strategy. I sincerely hope that the final strategy will survive, evolve and grow beyond successive governments because we are addressing the future of Western Australia, and most importantly, the future for our children.

In finalising the strategy, we are also committed to continue consulting with industry and the broader community and I invite your comments. Your contribution will assist the Western Australian Government to prepare a final strategy that will help create a sustainable future for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Gallop', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Dr Geoff Gallop MLA
Premier of Western Australia

September 2002

Overview of selected strategic actions

This consultation draft of the State Sustainability Strategy proposes a number of strategic actions for sustainability in forty-two priority areas that could be implemented over a five to ten year period. A selection of proposed actions is set out below under the Western Australian Government's six goals for sustainability.

Ensure that the way we govern is driving the transition to a sustainable future

- Demonstrate leadership by requiring government agencies to develop a **Sustainability Action Plan** to address a range of issues including energy use, greenhouse emissions, waste minimisation, community engagement and sustainability procurement.
- Initiate **sustainability assessment** – an integrated and holistic approach to decision-making to create 'net benefit' outcomes.
- Establish a **State–Local Government Sustainability Roundtable** to coordinate state and local government sustainability efforts, as well as partnerships with other stakeholders including the **WA Collaboration, industry and research organisations**.
- Develop planning and **Regional Sustainability Strategies** including regional 'sense of place' stories to embed sustainability.
- Promote Aboriginal employment targets in major developments, joint management with Aboriginal people of National Parks and an **Aboriginal Country Management Program**.

Play our part in solving the global challenges of sustainability

- Establish a new **Global Centre for Sustainability** combining expertise from universities, TAFE, the CSIRO, government and industry to undertake major international partnership projects on the interrelated issues of population, development aid and environmental technology.
- Establish a voluntary **Greenhouse Offsets** program to enable greenhouse emission reductions and carbon capture in major projects.
- Develop a **Biodiversity Conservation Strategy** that builds on the 30 new National Parks, assesses the need for new reserves, and supports the linking of major reserves with areas of privately owned bush and regeneration to help meet Australia's international obligations for biodiversity protection.
- Establish a **Taskforce** that will set short, medium and long-term transport goals for the transition from **oil vulnerability**, to gas, to the hydrogen economy.

Value and protect our environment and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources

- Incorporate sustainability principles and practices into **legislation** administered by relevant government agencies.
- Use **Statements of Planning Policy** and other mechanisms to co-ordinate the actions of local governments, regional councils and state natural resource management agencies for priority issues and areas, for example, regional drainage, biodiversity corridors, local community services and coastal planning.
- Build **community values** into regulatory approaches to natural resources management.

Plan and provide settlements that reduce ecological footprint and enhance our quality of life

- Encourage household water management through a range of measures (rainwater tanks, bores, grey water recycling, and native gardens) to conserve water as part of the **State Water Strategy**.
- Emphasise the **revitalisation of suburbs** and, as part of *Future Perth*, develop growth management to control urban sprawl.
- Overcome car dependence through development that builds on the doubling of the **rail system** and revamp the **Perth Bike Plan**.
- Introduce measures, including detailed plans for each waste stream, to meet the target of **zero waste by 2020**.
- Develop a **Sustainable Planning, Building and Construction Guide** to encourage thermal efficiency, solar orientation, accessible design and other sustainable building practices in new and renovated homes.

Support communities to fully participate in achieving a sustainable future

- Involve the community in developing **Regional Integrated Community Services Plans** to help prioritise and co-locate services.
- Establish demonstrations of sustainability in school buildings and grounds, including through schools adopting or rehabilitating an area of local bush.
- Develop a comprehensive **community education and awareness** process on sustainability.
- Promote local content in arts projects to support the development of '**sense of place**'.
- Hold an annual sustainability ethics seminar '**Many Cultures – One Earth**'.
- Use the *Consulting Citizens Resource Guide* to promote effective public consultation and active citizenship.

Assist business to benefit from and contribute to sustainability

- Establish training schemes to provide capacity in new areas of professional activity for sustainability through initiatives such as the **TAFE Centre for Applied Sustainability**.
- Review taxation, subsidies and financial incentives to promote sustainability and support **Sustainability Investment Tours**.
- Create **industry sustainability covenants** that recognise and help to market sustainability innovation and leadership.
- Develop through **industry partnerships** new approaches to sustainable building, eco-efficiency (the factor 4 agenda), sustainability assessment, mining and sustainability, corporate social responsibility and the new sustainability research and development agenda.

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Contents

3	Foreword		
4	Overview of selected strategic actions		
6	Acknowledgements		
8	Summary		
15	1. Introduction	130	6. Sustainability and settlements
16	Background	134	Managing urban and regional growth
17	The purpose of the State Sustainability Strategy	137	Revitalising declining centres and suburbs
17	Process to develop the draft Strategy	139	Integrating land use and balanced transport
18	Process to finalise and implement the Strategy	143	Managing freight and regional transport
19	About this document	145	Preserving air quality
		148	Reducing and managing waste
		151	Our water future
		155	Sustainable energy
		157	Preserving cultural heritage and landscapes and creating 'sense of place'
		160	Building sustainably
21	2. The conceptual basis: developing a framework for sustainability	164	7. Sustainability and community
22	The evolution of sustainability	167	Community services and development
24	What sustainability means	171	Housing and sustainability
24	Character of the Strategy	175	Sustaining healthy communities
25	Opportunities for sustainability	180	Education and community awareness for sustainability
27	A sustainability framework	184	Sustainability through culture and the arts
32	Indicators for sustainability	190	Multiculturalism and sustainability
34	3. Sustainability and governance	196	8. Sustainability and business
36	Sustainability assessment	198	Training and facilitation for sustainability
42	Institutional change	201	Financial reform and economic instruments for sustainability
45	Embracing sustainability in government agencies	204	Eco-efficiency and industrial ecology
51	Partnerships for action	207	Industry sustainability covenants
55	Planning for sustainability	209	9. Implementation
58	Sustainability in the regions	214	Appendixes
61	Indigenous communities and sustainability	215	A Sustainability seminars
66	Research and development for sustainability	216	B Sustainability case studies
70	Sustainability information online	219	C Background papers
73	Recognising sustainability excellence	221	D Written submissions
74	4. Contributing to global sustainability	223	List of Proposed Actions
75	Population, development aid and environmental technology		CD-ROM and Poster
80	Maintaining our biodiversity		A CD-ROM with an electronic copy of the draft Strategy and background material is in the pocket on the inside back cover, as well as a poster on the Sustainability Framework.
86	Responding to greenhouse and climate change		
89	Oil vulnerability, the gas transition and the hydrogen economy		
92	5. Sustainable use of natural resources		
95	Sustainable agriculture		
103	Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture		
108	Sustainable forestry and plantations		
111	Sustainable mining and petroleum production		
115	Sustainable tourism		
118	Protecting aquatic systems		
122	Sustainable coastal and marine environments		
127	Sustainable rangelands management		

Summary

Sustainability is meeting the needs of current and future generations through simultaneous environmental, social and economic improvement.

The Western Australian Government has embraced sustainability as a fundamental driver towards a better future for all Western Australians. The draft State Sustainability Strategy begins this process and responds comprehensively to this challenge.

In August and September 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development took place in Johannesburg, South Africa. The summit examined how the world had given meaning to sustainability and taken action the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. With the release of the draft State Sustainability Strategy, Western Australia is now also part of the global response to sustainability.

There are compelling reasons why Western Australia should be part of this global agenda. While the state's economy is robust, the health of our natural environment is compromised by threats like salinity, loss of biodiversity and climate change. Social problems of isolation, homelessness, poverty and other forms of inequity are also apparent. Sustainability challenges us to address these problems in an integrated way and to find opportunities that pursue new forms of development that do not compromise the health of our environment or society.

The character of the State Sustainability Strategy is to facilitate processes where creative dialogue can occur to help resolve deep-seated issues and tensions and to enable partnerships to open up new possibilities.

The transition to a more sustainable future is a long-term agenda that requires rethinking the way we live, use resources, govern and do business. These changes will take time as institutions change slowly. For example the process of legislative reform to better support sustainability may take many years, as will widespread community awareness and understanding about sustainability. The actions outlined in this Strategy aim to be implemented over the next five to ten years, though many could begin immediately.

Priorities for implementation will be determined by feedback from consultation and advice from roundtables and working groups established to drive the next stage of the process.

Making sense of sustainability

The definition of sustainability in the draft Strategy is challenging and visionary. It implies, for example, that an activity that only addresses two of the dimensions simultaneously (say provides both economic and social gains but ‘trades off’ the environment) is ultimately not sustainable.

Sustainability is sometimes described as the ‘triple bottom line’, to reflect the importance of considering equally the environmental, social and economic dimensions in decision-making. The definition in the draft Strategy goes beyond the triple bottom line through emphasising the importance of integration between these dimensions and achieving them simultaneously. The draft Strategy demonstrates where this is occurring already. Importantly it also proposes actions to move Western Australia beyond the triple bottom line toward integrated sustainability outcomes.

Sustainability framework

The sustainability framework consists of eleven principles, six long-term visions for Western Australia, each with a goal for the Western Australian Government and forty-two priority areas for action. The sustainability framework is represented graphically in the poster at the back of this document.

The eleven sustainability principles go beyond the well-established notions of ‘intergenerational equity’ and ‘the precautionary principle’ by attempting to better reflect the social dimension of sustainability. For example, additional principles are proposed which reflect the importance of culture and supporting a ‘sense of place’ as part of a more complete approach to sustainability. These principles are important guideposts for government activity, policy and decision-making.

A commitment to sustainability requires a belief in a better future for everyone. The government’s proposed sustainability goals are:

- **Ensure that the way we govern is driving the transition to a sustainable future.**
- **Play our part in solving the global challenges of sustainability.**
- **Value and protect our environment and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources.**
- **Plan and provide settlements that reduce the ecological footprint and enhance quality of life.**
- **Support communities to fully participate in achieving a sustainable future.**
- **Assist business to benefit from and contribute to sustainability.**

Opportunities for sustainability

The bulk of the strategy addresses the sustainability opportunities for Western Australia and is divided into six sections, one for each goal. The priority areas explored under each goal are summarised here and the proposed actions are also listed.

Sustainability and governance

Agency leadership

The government will demonstrate leadership by ensuring the way it governs is supporting sustainability through its policies, legislation, decision-making and programs. The sustainability of operations of agencies will be enhanced through Sustainability Action Plans. The government can also assist business and the community to embrace sustainability and the new opportunities that it presents.

Assessment

Sustainability assessment is an integrative, whole of government approach to decision-making that gives equal and up-front consideration to environment, social and economic factors. It is an innovative and important means of ensuring that government’s activities are sustainable, and also extending this expectation to business and the community. Sustainability assessment goes further than mitigating the negative impacts of an activity by searching for opportunities to achieve simultaneous improvement in all three aspects of the triple bottom line. Sustainability assessment will be undertaken on significant

projects, plans, policies and programs, Cabinet submissions, proposed government agreements, corporate plans and new legislation. A working group with industry will help to better define the emerging techniques of the triple bottom line.

Partnerships

Achieving a more sustainable future will also require government to enter into genuine partnerships with a range of key stakeholders to undertake planning processes that forge a sustainable future together. With the release of the draft strategy, partnerships will be established with the Western Australian Local Government Association, the recently established WA Collaboration (peak civil society group) and business representatives in order to develop common approaches for sustainability. They will help finalise and implement the State Sustainability Strategy.

Planning and regional

A particular focus of the State-Local Government Sustainability Roundtable will be investigating the potential of the statutory planning system and Regional Councils of Local Government to support sustainability outcomes, particularly at a regional level. This is the most appropriate scale to undertake planning for sustainability. Regional Sustainability Strategies will also be developed to apply the State Sustainability Strategy regionally and to allow interested communities to tell their 'stories' and further define their 'sense of place'.

Indigenous

The Western Australian Government's commitment to a new and just relationship with Indigenous people also provides the context to develop Indigenous Regional Sustainability Strategies that contribute to Regional Sustainability Strategies and form the basis for longer-term Comprehensive Regional Agreements.

Research and development

Sustainability requires innovation, supported by research and development, to continue to develop new solutions to the challenges that sustainability presents. Western Australia is well placed to contribute to resolving both local and global challenges and this will be supported through the establishment of a Global Centre for Sustainability involving universities, government and industry. The government can also support sustainability through recognising and rewarding innovation and excellence by business, individuals and others within the community.

Information and excellence

Integrated and accessible information is critical to sustainability, allowing targets and indicators to be monitored and community and business engagement on key issues. The government is hoping to establish Sustainability On line, a one-stop shop for sustainability information. The government can also recognise sustainability excellence with an annual award.

Contributing to global sustainability

Western Australia has much to offer the rest of world in addressing global sustainability challenges like population growth, protecting biodiversity, climate change and the transition from fossil fuels.

Population, development aid and environmental technology

We can assist with the significant challenge of reducing global population growth through contributing to development aid, reducing our own consumption of resources and developing sustainable technologies that can be used in developing countries through initiatives such as the Global Centre for Sustainability.

Biodiversity

Western Australia's biodiversity is recognised as highly significant globally, and its conservation is a prerequisite for sustainability. In addition, biodiversity offers the potential for new forms of sustainable industries, such as bio-prospecting and nature-based tourism. The challenge for Western Australia is to better understand the biodiversity that we have and to ensure it is protected for future generations.

Greenhouse

Climate change is likely to impact significantly on Western Australia and a comprehensive State Greenhouse Strategy is being developed to address the issues of greenhouse emissions, adaptation, sequestration and the need for new industries. As climate change is a truly global phenomenon, Western Australia can also assist the rest of the world to play its part in becoming less carbon-intensive through developing new, cleaner and less energy-intensive processes and industries.

Oil vulnerability, the gas transition and the hydrogen economy

While fossil fuels have been the basis of industrial economies for several hundred years, it is recognised that their use contributes significant greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. A clear imperative is the vulnerability of our economies and societies to the declining availability of fossil fuels, particularly oil. Western Australia has a strategic advantage because of its large reserves of gas, which is increasingly viewed as a transition fuel towards a more sustainable hydrogen economy. A Taskforce will pursue this issue.

Sustainable use of natural resources

Much of Western Australia's wealth and sense of identity comes from the use of natural resources. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and the production of minerals and petroleum all provide employment, development opportunities and wealth. Tourism is also a significant contributor to the economy and relies heavily on the natural assets of the state. However, there are significant sustainability challenges to many of these sectors and action must be undertaken to address these. The sustainable use and management of aquatic systems, the coast and marine environment and the rangelands deserves special consideration because of their significant scale and importance to the Western Australian community.

Agriculture

The declining terms of trade for farmers, significant environmental impacts of agriculture and diminishing rural populations all indicate that there are very real and significant challenges to achieving sustainable agriculture in Western Australia, as there are in many parts of the world. Shifting agriculture to a more sustainable basis will require continued innovation to develop new industries which do not impact the environment and new policy settings that recognise and reward sustainable agricultural production.

Fishing

Western Australia is fortunate to have a well-managed fishing industry, supported by regulation and technology and resources for monitoring and reporting. The Commonwealth Government requires export fisheries to address sustainability issues in order to obtain export approval. The Western Australian Government has recently adopted a policy on the ecologically sustainable management of fisheries that is a world first. Notwithstanding this, further work is required to better reflect the social aspects of sustainability and to better understand fishing in the context of marine ecosystems.

Forests and plantations

Western Australian law provides for the ecologically sustainable management of our forests. The government ended logging in old growth forests and is proceeding to incorporate these areas into secure conservation reserves, including 30 new national parks. As part of this process the government has put in place programs to restructure the timber industry to maintain social capital and regional development opportunities. The development of the new Forest Management Plan provides the opportunity to put in place a framework for the sustainable management of forests into the long-term. Significant effort is also being directed to developing the plantation industry in Western Australia.

Mining and petroleum production

The sustainability of the mining and petroleum resources sector has been the focus of recent international and national attention through the Minerals Mining and Sustainable Development initiative, supported by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. This has allowed companies to examine what sustainability means for extractive industries and will be pursued

further in a partnership with the industry. The contribution of resource development to the well-being of surrounding communities and the use of sustainability assessment methods are important emerging trends.

Tourism

Western Australia's unique and highly diverse natural environment offers a different kind of tourism experience that people from around the world are wanting—subtle, low impact, natural and cultural experiences. Sustainable tourism provides opportunities to protect the natural resources on which this industry depends. Increased effort is needed to assist the tourism industry benefit from sustainable tourism. Certification is an important mechanism to assist this.

Aquatic systems

Many of our aquatic systems are under stress from surrounding land uses. The government has begun a process of developing Environmental Protection Policies on aquatic systems based on community values and scientifically derived water quality objectives.

Coastal and marine

Coastal areas and the marine environment are highly significant to Western Australians; many of our settlements cling to the coast and much of our recreation, leisure and tourism rely on the ocean, beaches and surrounds. A Taskforce recently reviewed the structural arrangements for coastal planning and management in Western Australia and highlighted the importance of sustainability as a driving concept for future coastal planning. In significant areas the sustainability of coastal areas will need to be supported through statutory planning procedures.

Rangelands

There is on-going concern about degradation of the rangelands, the commensurate loss in productivity and profitability and the loss of social capital. New approaches and commitments to pastoral sustainability are emerging. There is potential to plan for and provide a sustainable future for the rangelands that accommodates a diversity of land use and activity.

Sustainability and settlements

The way we plan, develop and redevelop our cities and towns greatly influences our resource use and the quality of life in our settlements. In urban areas the impacts of our lifestyle often become very apparent through pollution and waste. Clearly, there are many opportunities to create a more sustainable future through looking at the way we design and live in our settlements.

Growth management and revitalisation

There is a need to prioritise growth in some areas in Perth where there is social and economic disadvantage and to redefine growth in places where development is a threat to sustainability, like some coastal settlements. *Future Perth* will be a significant process to manage growth. Some areas of Perth are in decline after the first phase of development has passed. Most inner city areas have regenerated and the government is helping regenerate other areas through redevelopment authorities and public housing. However, there are urban regions where revitalisation is stalled and could be unlocked to achieve broad sustainability outcomes. A trial project 'Reviving the Suburbs' will be developed.

Integrating land use and balanced transport

The priority given to transport modes and how land use is integrated in these modes are important determinants of the sustainability of settlements. Perth's development over the past fifty years has been guided by planning for cars. This needs to be more balanced with better-integrated land use and transport building on the commitment to double the metropolitan rail system. The government has also recently concluded a review of the freight network on the basis of sustainability and identified a number of actions to guide future activity in this area.

Air

The design of settlements impacts on our air quality. The Air Quality Management Plan needs to be implemented. Reducing and managing wastes in

settlements is fundamental to ensuring a healthy environment and good quality of life and the government's goal of zero waste by 2020 is the vision guiding a number of proposed initiatives.

Water

The sustainability of our water supply is an issue of concern to many Western Australians, especially those who live in the South West. There is a need to provide a vision for the future, new sources of supply and new ways to save water.

Energy

The use of household electricity and gas, renewable fuels, transport fuels, commercial and industrial fuels also provides opportunities for addressing sustainability through providing an efficient service to the economy, helping build communities and not harming the environment.

Heritage

Our sense of place is strongly influenced by the history of where we live and the places that make it unique and special. Valuing and preserving the special cultural elements and built places that are within our settlements can help generate this sense of place and provide a secure base for approaching the future.

Building and construction

The way we construct our buildings and infrastructure provides many opportunities for sustainability. Sustainable construction can result in buildings that are simultaneously less resource-intensive and provide a better environment in which to live and work. A sustainable Planning, Building and Construction Guide will be produced with industry. The government is developing a number of initiatives that share this goal of sustainable building including the Greenhouse Strategy, *Future Perth*, the State Planning Strategy, the State Housing Policy and the Built Environment Policy.

Sustainability and community

In the sustainability debate the social dimension has historically been given less attention than economic and environmental elements. It is now acknowledged that by meeting community needs and enhancing social capital, communities can be better positioned to contribute to the wide range of issues that need to be addressed to achieve a sustainable future. The draft Strategy specifically acknowledges the opportunities to pursue sustainability within the community through health, housing, education, the arts and multiculturalism.

Community services

Central to advancing sustainability is the coordination of government community services including housing, health, education, community development, disability services, justice, Indigenous affairs, regional development and planning. A Regional Integrated Community Services policy will be introduced.

Housing

Good housing options are needed to provide shelter, safety, accessibility and contribute to a sense of community. Housing location and affordability are critical to sustainability and the roles of local government and housing associations need to be increased to assist in this task.

Health

As our lifestyles, consumption patterns and growth of settlements impact on the environment, new hazards and diseases are emerging. The principles of sustainability can be used in environmental and community health management to address some of the causes of health hazards and enhance and promote health.

Education

Education, both formal and informal, plays a vital role in raising awareness on sustainability as well as shifting individual attitudes and behaviour. Formal education and school provide excellent opportunities to demonstrate sustainability in action.

Culture and the arts

The arts has a part to play in providing much of the interpretive work behind sustainability. The arts can be employed as a means to engender community development for sustainability through interpreting cultural values, demonstrating partnerships and celebrating our achievements and hopes.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism enables community coherence and diversity of values to help solve sustainability problems. Dialogue among various traditions and cultures can increase our understanding of how sustainability can be achieved across society and clarify the principles we are using to interpret sustainability.

Sustainability and business

Business and industry are adapting to the sustainability agenda and in many cases are leading the community and government. The business opportunities emerging from the sustainability agenda need to be grasped and new partnerships with the community and government forged. The new global sustainability economy will provide many opportunities for Western Australian business to benefit through demand for new sustainable products and services reflected by the increasing interest in socially responsible investment. The government can assist business to benefit in a range of ways from facilitation of new business opportunities to linking Western Australian innovations for sustainability with investment funds.

Training

Training is the link between sustainability aspirations and new economic opportunities. The government will work towards a new TAFE Centre for Applied Sustainability to help coordinate and focus the accreditation of professionals and the new sustainability training agenda.

Financial and economic instruments

The structure of the economy is partly determined by the subsidies and indirect support used to attract and support particular industries. These are often important in maintaining international competitiveness, supporting new industries and jobs and can enable the state to ensure that the economy moves in a particular strategic direction. However, they can also distort the market, and can encourage unsustainable patterns of development. Government currently provides a range of incentives and support measures to assist in the development of business in Western Australia. There is potential through these mechanisms to promote sustainability.

Eco efficiency and industrial ecology

New techniques are emerging in industry to simultaneously reduce resource use, minimise costs and improve productivity. Industrial ecology and cleaner production are two of these techniques and are part of the Cleaner Production Statement developed by the Western Australian Sustainable Industries Group and Curtin University's Centre for Cleaner Production. A working group will explore the potential for 'factor 4' improvements in Western Australia, ie., exploring how we can double wealth while halving resource use.

Covenants

Progressive businesses, seeing the benefits of using cleaner and less harmful production methods, often drive sustainability and lead the way for others in their industry sector. Government can make use of this by recognising and encouraging the efforts of progressive businesses, disseminating information about success stories and encouraging other businesses to rise to the standard set by the leaders in their sector. The use of 'sustainability covenants' is a new tool that can be used to assist this process.

All proposed actions are listed at the end of this document.