



MAYORAL REPORT

10th October 2006

**MM2 KEY FINDINGS OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE BEYOND 2030
FILE: 927 EAG {Folio No. *}**

SUMMARY:

Reporting to council on the key findings of the "*Sustainable Development Conference Beyond 2030 - Solutions, Directions and Trends*", held in Sydney on 13th and 14th September 2006.



BACKGROUND:

Two (2) staff from Sustainable Development Services (Nathan Hegerty / Grant Nelson) and I attended the subject conference. The conference and exhibition was designed to assist local government staff to identify, plan and implement best practice sustainable development solutions and to showcase leading edge examples of outstanding Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives by Australian local governments.

The main themes and objectives of the conference included:

- integrating sustainable development into planning strategies;
- measuring progress towards sustainable development outcomes;
- building sustainability into operational activities;
- positioning local government in the leadership role for sustainable development;
- harnessing community energies to achieve environmental goals;
- best practice case studies in:
 - water management;
 - waste minimisation and recycling;
 - greenhouse emissions control;
 - the built environment and preservation; and
 - enhancement of biodiversity.

Key Findings

A number of Local Authorities, from all over Australia presented case studies on their progress, success and lessons learnt in regards to preparing and implementing ESD frameworks and strategies. There were a number of key findings which were reinforced in the majority of the presentations, explained in detail below:

1. The Need for the ESD Strategy to drive the Annual Management Plan

The vast majority of presentations acknowledged the fact that if their ESD Strategy was to be implemented successfully then there was a need for it to be the driving force behind the development of Council's annual management plan. The advantage of integrating the two plans is that the ESD Strategy provides a strong strategic direction, developed in consultation with the broader community and so should drive the annual management plan which allocates the resources and budget required to implement the actions.

2. The Importance of a Community Steering Committee and Community Consultation

Again all presentations emphasised the importance of a community based steering committee and the need for effective community consultation in the development of an ESD Strategy. However one of the lessons learnt by providing for comprehensive community consultation is the fact that it takes a considerable amount of time and resources to be effective. Many of the Councils were spending upwards of \$50,000 for an effective community consultation program.

3. The Need for a Cultural Shift within Council's and the Community

One of the reoccurring themes throughout many of the presentations and in general conversation was the need for a cultural shift within organisations and the broader community towards a more sustainably thinking and practising culture. There is a need to integrate decision making both within Council and the broader community. It is time for Councils and the community's perception of Council to move away from the traditional 'roads, rates and rubbish' scenario. The role of Local Government is rapidly changing and if Council's are to keep in touch with their communities there is no choice but to change.

One of the key ways of instigating this change in culture both within Council and in the community is through

effective governance and leadership. Local Council's being closest to the people (rather than State and Federal governments) were identified as one of the key stakeholders to do this, as detailed further key finding No. 4.

4. The Importance of Council Showing Leadership Towards Sustainability Initiatives

One of the key ways identified to drive a shift in culture was through leadership. Councils being the governing body of the local area have the greatest ability to both influence and enforce changes (through legislation) to the way we do things. However, as emphasised in many of the presentations, if the community are to take Councils seriously, there is a need for Councils to lead the way in sustainable day-to-day operations. This may include the utilisation of energy and water saving initiatives, switching to renewable energy sources, using recycled paper, reducing wastes, car pooling etc. There were many examples given at the conference whereby Councils were the organisations taking the initiatives and showing the way by being a leader rather than an enforcer and it wasn't long following this that the private sector and broader community began to embark on their own sustainability initiatives.

5. Historically an Under Resourced Area of Council's Budget

One of the main reoccurring themes outlining the lessons learnt was the under estimation of time, budget and human resources required to have a successful ESD Strategy prepared and implemented. Historically Council's have not provided an adequate budget, or number of staff required to effectively prepare and implement an ESD Strategy. There is increasing pressure for this to change and many councils have taken the brave step to integrate ESD Strategies into the operating budget of Council, so that they drive annual management plans. Also in many cases implementation of the Strategy required additional staffing of the natural resource and sustainability sections of Council. It seems that this approach has been highly successful in implementing the strategies outlined at the conference.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

The conference focused on many environmental initiatives that form part of an ESD Strategy. It showcased many leading edge examples of how positive environmental outcomes often have a positive effect on the social and economic systems of a project and thus an overall sustainable outcome.

- *Social*

The conference emphasised the need for a community based steering group and the need for comprehensive community consultation to ensure ESD Strategies are supported by the broader community.

- *Economic (Financial)*

The conference emphasised the need for an appropriate budget to be allocated for the preparation and particularly the implementation of ESD strategies and initiatives. In the longer term Council should expect significant cost savings from the increased efficiencies within their own operations.

- *Policy or Statutory*

The conference recognised the legislation, namely the Local Government Act that is driving the integration of ESD into Council operations.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council note the key findings of the conference, particularly in light of the development of the Draft Kempsey Shire ESD Strategy.

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E A Green
MAYOR