



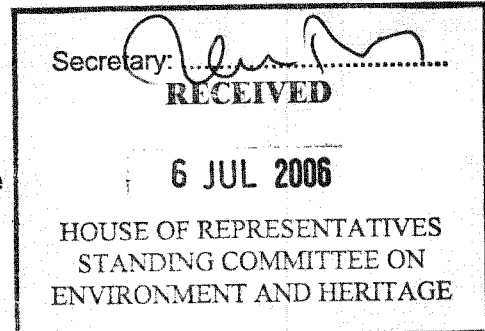
# CALOUNDRA CITY COUNCIL

SUBMISSION 98

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29 June, 2006

Inquiry Secretary  
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Secretary

## RESPONSE TO DISCUSSION PAPER – PROPOSED NATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER

On behalf of Caloundra City Council I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed National Sustainability Charter (NSC) and the Terms of Reference for the Standing Committee for Environment & Heritage, and advise that Caloundra City Council supports the initiative.

Sustainability has been embraced through adoption of this Council's strategic planning instrument, Caloundra City Plan 2004, and other strategic planning and policy documents and programs.

The following discussion and comments have been prepared as they relate to implementation and monitoring of the broad suite of strategic planning and policy documents and programs designed to achieve ecological sustainability in Caloundra City.

### 1. Functional Structure

- (a) The National Sustainability Commission (the Commission) should be responsible for establishing, reviewing and reporting on the National Sustainability Charter.
- (b) The Commission should adopt a role that represents key roles and responsibilities that are chartered for similar organisations, i.e. National Competition Council and National Audit Office.
- (c) The National Sustainability Charter (NSC) should set the overall direction and guide progress towards sustainability through adoption of the broad triple bottom line framework.
- (d) The NSC should establish a vision that focuses all the aspirational goals, indicators and measures.

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- (e) The NSC should start broadly focussed rather than just the narrow elements identified in the Terms of Reference, i.e. The built environment, Water, Energy, Transport and Ecological footprint.
- (f) The NSC priority areas need to be derived from a top down approach that identifies and assesses the key elements that will determine sustainability (refer to section 2 below).

## 2. Over-arching Philosophy

- (a) By inference the 5 key elements identified above indicate the Sustainability Charter is for a sustainable Australia rather than solely a sustainable environment.
- (b) Through adoption of the triple bottom line framework, a sustainable Australia should be defined by:
  - a. A sustainable natural environment – sustainable *interaction with* all the natural resources that it contains.
  - b. A sustainable social environment – sustainable *integration of* all the social resources that it contains.
  - c. A sustainable economic environment – sustainable *management of* the economic resources that it contains.
- (c) The use of the term “environment” to describe the natural environment should be discarded and the term “natural environment” adopted as environment on its own does not just mean nature, as shown above. We live, work and play in social environments that are not effectively defined, we buy, sell and conduct other commerce in economic environments that are not effectively defined. Adoption of the term “natural environment” should be promoted by the Commission through the “State of the Environment” report system and other similar systems.
- (d) To achieve all three components a balance must be reached but with recognition that we cannot “use” the natural environment, which infers abusing, taking as much as possible without giving back to provide balance and harmony (sustainability).
- (e) The NSC needs to define the broad resource areas and then identify the key elements within each of the triple bottom line categories. Broadly they could be identified and grouped as follows:
  - a. Natural Environment Sustainability Resource Areas:
    - i. Atmosphere – e.g. air quality, climate change, etc
    - ii. Geosphere – e.g. soil fertility, etc
    - iii. Hydrosphere – e.g. water quality, water quantity, etc
    - iv. Biosphere – e.g. species abundance, species productivity, species health, etc
  - b. Social Environment Sustainability Resource Area:
    - i. Anthrosphere – e.g. human health, social harmony, natural resource equality, economic equality, etc
  - c. Economic Environment Sustainability Resource Area:
    - i. Econosphere – e.g. re-use, resource balance, renewable energy use, etc.
- (f) Within each of these categories specific key elements can then be defined, drilling down to identify objectives, indicators, targets, measures and actions.
- (g) We agree with the Committee that the State of the Environment reporting framework would be an ideal mechanism to report on sustainability indicators in order to provide benchmarking and monitoring data. We believe the Commission should be responsible for adapting and improving the framework in parallel with development of the Sustainability Charter.

- (h) We agree with the submissions to the Sustainable Cities report for the need to adequately fund and "join-up" the levels of government, with responsibilities linked to accountability and funding, and development of a sustainability equivalent to competition payments.

### **3. Responses to Questions (in sequence)**

#### **General**

- (a) A Sustainability Charter should consist of aspirational statements and set targets. Sustainability is an end not a journey. You either are sustainable or are not, how we get there is the journey. As such, having aspirational statements provide a unifying role that hopefully we all can co-operatively work together to achieve by meeting the targets and re-setting them, which is the journey, to ultimately achieve sustainability.
- (b) The research required cannot be determined until we understand what it is we are trying to achieve, how we are going to achieve it, the indicators that will inform us that we are achieving it and the measures to monitor and determine whether or not we are achieving it. Once these are established we are in a position to identify the gaps in our knowledge and science, and direct research appropriately. Focussed research into the gaps should be led by the Commonwealth, but funded by all levels of government and private enterprise through effective funding arrangements.
- (c) Existing standards could be applied to the Sustainability Charter. However, applicability should be determined following establishment of the indicators and measures.
- (d) The Charter should be able to be framed in such a way as to ensure integration into all levels of government decision making by keeping this ideal at the forefront whilst designing the Charter to avoid pitfalls along the way rather than at the end of the process.
- (e) It is highly likely there will be a cost because we have been, are currently and will likely be for some time to come, unsustainable. If we were sustainable we would not need to go through this exercise of developing a Sustainability Charter to set targets for sustainability. Everything would be in balance, in harmony. The costs will be, but not necessarily limited to, monitoring and reporting, and implementing actions to become sustainable, and changing the way we currently "use" the natural, social and economic environments' resources. The gain will be to those resource areas that have become depleted as a result of unsustainable past, present and short-medium term future practices.
- (f) The Sustainability Charter should be able to be incorporated into the national State of the Environment reporting framework as discussed above.
- (g) The National Competition Policy could be a good template for consideration of incentive payments for sustainable outcomes. However, it would be worthwhile to research alternatives as may be able to improve on the NCP template.
- (h) Payments under the Sustainability Charter could be awarded through demonstrated commitment to implementing actions that will achieve or work towards sustainability as defined by the Charter.
- (i) It should be possible to measure social and cultural values in relation to the Sustainability Charter, however it will depend on what indicators are considered important within the context of a sustainable Australia. Are the indicators chosen relevant to Australia being sustainable?

### **The Built Environment**

- (a) At this stage we are not convinced the Built Environment should be a key element of the Sustainability Charter in its own right. Therefore, it is too early to be determining objectives and measures.
- (b) Existing building infrastructure sustainability needs to be defined in terms of the resources used to construct and maintain as is versus retro-fitting versus replacement, its efficiency in current energy use versus retro-fitting versus total replacement, what value it has in a cultural historical context to a sustainable Australia if any, etc.
- (c) Heritage buildings are nice and provide a link to the past. Whether they should be part of the Sustainability Charter depends on whether they really contribute to a sustainable Australia. An evaluation process / matrix may need to be established to effectively measure the inherent value of heritage to a sustainable Australia to determine whether they should be protected as part of the Sustainability Charter.
- (d) The 5 star rating system may be able to be used as part of the Charter. However, that will depend on the indicators chosen and whether that system would be an acceptable measure for any of the indicators.

### **Water**

- (a) Water quality, if chosen as an indicator, should use a similar set of measures used in the Healthy Waterways Scorecard for South East Queensland.
- (b) Targets should be focused on both reducing water consumption and increasing water re-use as a priority over increased water storage infrastructure.
- (c) Water catchment area health should be measured using the full suite of Sustainability Charter indicators and measures where applicable for the natural, social and economic resources within and utilising that water catchment area.

### **Energy**

- (a) Renewable energy could be measured by the reduced demand for non-renewable energy sources (i.e. fossil fuels) and increased use of renewable energy sources (i.e. increased sales of solar panels, etc). However, renewable energy should be measured as part of a total energy balance for all the energy sources available within Australia, whether being utilised or not, i.e. of all the sunlight that is available across Australia, to what extent are we utilising this resource? Are we wasting it? How much is being wasted and, therefore, potentially contributing to global warming?
- (b) Encouraging an increase in energy re-use requires a concerted community-based social marketing strategy to be developed and implemented that utilises incentives, loan schemes, grants, etc coupled with increased costs against non-renewable energy sources, provided there are suitable and comparable alternatives in the renewable sector to replace the non-renewables.
- (c) Awareness of environmental, social and economic benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy should be able to be measured through an appropriately designed and effectively implemented community-based social marketing program survey.

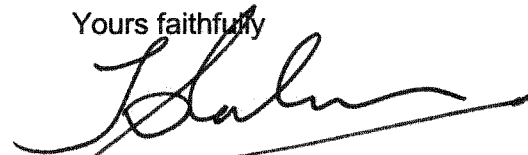
### **Transport**

- (a) The efficiency of transport systems should be measured not judged through their resource demands (construction, operation, maintenance, public use, energy consumption and use of renewable energy versus non-renewable energy sources, etc).

- (b) Solutions are required to reduce private transport needs with appropriate measures to evaluate progress towards sustainability. Solutions will need to be increased urban densities around major town and city centres, increased government spending on and developer contributions to improving public transport instead of continually upgrading the road transport network, greater connectivity, incentives, greater regional spending to increase employment opportunities in regional centres and satellite towns and cities so commuting from regional centres to cities is reduced, etc.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important debate.

Yours faithfully



Terry Scanlan

DIRECTOR, GOVERNANCE & STRATEGY