



SUSTAINABLE CITIES POLICY COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION TO:
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE
ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**

BACKGROUND

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage is conducting an Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter and has invited a submission from the CCCLM. The Committee will meet with members of the CCCLM on August 17.

The Standing Committee prepared a Discussion Paper to scope some of the key areas central to the preparation of a sustainability charter and to canvass input from a wide range of areas.

This submission responds to questions posed in the Discussion Paper prepared by the Standing Committee.

Submission 1/06
14 August, 2006

The CCCLM commends the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage for the undertaking this Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter. This is a positive step arising from the Sustainable Cities report that the Standing Committee completed last year. The CCCLM reaffirms its offer to contribute to the development of a framework and principles on the issues raised in the discussion paper.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Australian Government

- **Establish an Australian Sustainability Charter that sets key national targets across a number of areas including, water, transport, energy, building design and planning.**
- **Encourage a Council of Australian Governments agreement to the charter and its key targets.**

The CCCLM supports this as a starting point. While obtaining COAG agreement to the charter and its key targets is important, equally Local Government needs to be consulted and fully engaged in setting targets as they are more able to feed back responses and also influence achievements at a residential and business level.

Targets need to reflect the differences in urban and regional areas and specifically capital cities.

More important than agreed targets will be agreed implementation mechanisms and commitments to resourcing, policy and removal of institutional barriers at the state and federal levels.

Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that all new Government policy proposals be evaluated as to whether they impact on urban sustainability and if so, be assessed against the Australian Sustainability Charter and the COAG agreed sustainability targets.

COAG agreed targets need to reflect the impact of urbanised areas on State targets. As per the comments on Recommendation 1 it is important that this is recognised.

The evaluation needs to utilise a consistent, comprehensive and transparent mechanism(s) or framework.

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that:

- **The Australian Government establish an independent Australian Sustainability Commission headed by a National Sustainability Commissioner;**
- **Task the Commission with monitoring the extent to which Commonwealth funds and State and Territory use of Commonwealth funds promotes the COAG agreed sustainability targets; and**
- **Task the Commission with exploring the concept of incentive payments to the States and Territories for sustainability outcomes along the lines of the National Competition Council model.**

Not all states passed on National Competition Policy payments to local government and it is imperative that if incentive payments are paid they are paid, or required to be passed on, to the level of government responsible for the sustainability outcomes. Further, it is important that payments are monitored to ensure the targets are achieved across both urban and regional areas.

The Commission should also address issues or barriers which occur at or can be remedied at a national level, for example, the Building Code of Australia.

GENERAL

Should a sustainability charter consist of aspirational statements, set targets (such as measurable water quality) or both?

The charter should identify aspiration and future desired outcomes including the establishment of understandable and measurable targets. Base lines describing where we are now need to be determined across the 5 key elements of the charter.

The charter should also outline the mechanisms for achieving these targets.

What research will be needed to develop and support the Sustainability Charter?

Research should concentrate on developing measurement systems and indicators that can capture the full gamut of the sustainability issues including social, economic and environmental impacts.

Existing data can be used for establishing base line information.

Research should also be conducted to identify successful implementation strategies.

Can existing standards (such as Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme) be applied to the Sustainability Charter?

There are many existing tools that are currently used and should be supported in their development as part of the Sustainability Charter. The charter should also become the key driver for the future use and form of these tools including the Green Building Council's GreenStar program and the Australian Building Greenhouse Star Rating Scheme.

Consistent application of these tools and standards nationally will assist in aligning results across all levels of government.

Wherever possible the plethora of existing tools/standards should be integrated with each other and incorporated into the relevant overarching standards which currently operate. Also, every effort should be made to eliminate contradictions between standards and other supporting systems or frameworks.

Can the charter be framed in such a way to ensure that it can be integrated into all levels of government decision making?

CCCLM sees this as critical to the success of a Sustainability Charter. State Governments, through the COAG agreement, should adopt the charter at a State level and through it to local government. Due to differing service delivery responsibilities in states and territories an integrated whole of government approach will be essential to achieving targets. Partnering requirements on projects at all levels of government needs to be formalised and clearly articulated. This would clearly articulate each partners responsibilities and resource commitment.

Will there be a cost/gain to the economy by introducing the target(s)?

The cost/gain to the economy will need to be measured over a period of time as short term investment in infrastructure and efficiency measures will result in long term economic and environmental gains.

Could a sustainability charter be incorporated into the national State of the Environment reporting?

A revised reporting structure may be required to accurately reflect a sustainability charter.

Is National Competition Policy a good template for consideration of incentive payments for sustainable outcomes?

CCCLM sees this as a potential template for incentive payments as long as it is mandatory for State and Territory governments to forward payments to local government for its outcomes.. Local government is often in a far better position to drive sustainability outcomes in particular from residents and the business sector.

How should payments be awarded under the Sustainability Charter?

Is it possible to measure cultural and social values in relation to a Sustainability Charter?

Payments should be awarded to agencies that demonstrate real contributions to meeting the targets set for the 5 key elements. Contributions should be subject to a robust and transparent assessment using agreed milestones and/or KPIs.

Payments for cultural and social achievements would be essential in ensuring that the charter is truly about sustainability although measurement of these indicators may be more difficult than environmental indicators.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

What objectives are applicable to the built environment?

How would these be measured?

Objectives for the built environment must reflect whole of life cycle management and resources and use of products and materials that deliver sustainable outcomes through reduction in resource use.

Urban planning should reflect sustainability initiatives such as increased development along existing transport corridors and promotion of the use of public transport, walking and cycling. There should also be a focus on "in-fill" development to reduce pressure on agriculturally or naturally significant land as well as reducing costs associated with the construction of new infrastructure.

How should we rate the sustainability of existing building infrastructure?

Existing tools such as GreenStar and ABGR could be used. Clear measurable targets need to be developed and pursued for existing building stock. The reuse of existing building stock is an important factor in the sustainability of urban environments.

Transformation of existing building stock could be driven by the Commonwealth and State governments requiring the buildings they lease and own to meet a reasonable GreenStar and ABGR rating.

Could a measurement of level of retro-fitting achieve this?

How would we measure levels of retro-fitting?

Retro-fitting is very difficult to measure. For larger commercial buildings where development consent is required from local government there is an ability to impose requirements for retro-fitting and these can be recorded and measured.

For residential retro-fits and small businesses where it may be something as small as replacements of taps, toilets and showerheads there is no easily recordable method of measurement. Voluntary registers may be a way of obtaining some level of information.

Do we need to protect heritage buildings as part of the sustainability charter?

Yes, protection of culturally and/or historically significant buildings and places is an important element of social sustainability. Building reuse should be encouraged in order to retain these buildings and deliver new life to them.

Can existing building standards, such as the 5 star rating system, be incorporated into the Sustainability Charter?

Yes. These standards should be reviewed to ensure they are equal to those in countries that are achieving high sustainability targets. The Building Code of Australia should incorporate standards and codes that will allow for the targets to be achieved.

WATER

How should water quality be measured?

Existing measurement standards can be used for potable and recreational water quality. These include Australian Standards. The CSIRO should be consulted for the best method of measurement.

Should targets be focussed on reducing water consumption, increasing water reuse or both?

Both, with an emphasis on water consumption. Consumption reduction targets should be set for industrial, commercial and residential land uses and improvements to the management of water supply particularly in old systems in urban areas.

How can we measure the health of water catchment areas?

There are various measures in existence that test for defined indicator contaminants in waterways. The CSIRO is best placed to provide advice on these.

ENERGY

How should we measure the use of renewable energy?

Renewable energy use measurements can be sourced from energy suppliers. It should be reported as a percentage of total energy use and targets set for increasing this percentage. It is important that there are also targets for reducing total energy use and for increasing new renewable energy generation (determined by Green power definition). NEMMCO would likely be able to provide this information to the Inquiry.

How do we encourage an increase in the renewable energy use?

There are currently barriers to people using renewable energy; in essence there is a cost penalty for the choice to use renewable energy. The government should review methods such as investment in R&D, subsidies and tax allowances to encourage growth in the renewable energy market.

A detailed review of the supply of renewable power and international examples of market driven change should be examined and reported on.

Can we measure the awareness of the environmental, economic and social benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy?

There are many ways this can be measured, through market research, sales figures of item types for example energy efficient light bulbs and energy bills that indicate changes in use.

TRANSPORT

How do we judge the efficiency of transport systems?

What transport infrastructure measures will reduce private transport needs?

The reduction of private transport use is critical to the sustainability of cities. The costs of congestion, health and safety are growing as the reliance on the private vehicle grows.

Infrastructure measures that could reduce this dependence are:

- Increased density along major transport corridors
- Increased density in urban areas to ensure a concentrated demand for public transport
- Provision of public transport infrastructure for alternate modes such as cycling and walking at the early stages of development
- A clean, convenient, reliable and safe system that is fully integrated with land use planning

How do we measure these?

Through surveys such as journey to work and reporting on transport infrastructure built each year including public transport, roads, walking paths and cycleways. The measurement could be in dollars spent, travelling capacity or distance.

The role of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) should be recognised as providing tools and measurements that are common across local government in Australia and worldwide for energy, water and transport.