

SUBMISSION NO. 62



**Sustainable
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18th May 2006

Mr Robert Little

Inquiry Secretary
Sustainability Charter
House of Reps, Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Mr Little,

STC SUBMISSION

The STC would like to thank the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage for the chance to comment on its discussion paper on the proposed Sustainability Charter. The STC supports the idea of a Sustainability Charter that is both aspirational in nature and sets short and medium-term goals. Present policy issues such as climate change and oil prices demand urgent short-term actions by all levels of government, as well as longer term ones that form the basis of similar charters (eg Rio Earth Summit statement in 1992). The experience from WA's 2004 State Sustainability Strategy (<http://www.sustainability.dpc.wa.gov.au/docs/Strategy.htm>) is that it has failed to deliver actions at a government level even though it had widespread community support and a comprehensive delivery framework (eg Sustainability Roundtable, departmental sustainability plans) was established.

Our belief is that NO FURTHER research needs to be completed to develop and support the Sustainability Charter. The required work has been done both here and overseas, what is needed is a government desire to have new standards delivered (eg MRET extended, carbon trading system, BASIX....) in all sectors of our community. The Charter needs high-level support at Federal and State levels and its standards need to become part of the day to day programs and reporting of all government agencies.

Such a Charter and implementation program may have short-term costs, but in the longer term it may very well save the Australian community from extreme hardship. There is a growing convergence of scientific researchers that climate change is real and unfolding more rapidly than expected. There is also a great number of sources who now agree that the peak in global production will occur by 2010, if it hasn't already. These two issues are interrelated as many of the proposed programs to address peak oil (eg coal to liquid plants) would make climate change worse by increasing CO2 emissions.

A *Sustainability Charter* should touch all activities of Australians- it should become the nation's second most important document after the Constitution. It should cover all sectors, including:

- i) **Water**- the need is obvious in all states that we need to use less water and obtain it in a more sustainable fashion. Overall water consumption should be lowered and water in major urban centres recycled.
- ii) **Agriculture**- this sector underpins regional and rural Australia as well as much of Australia's exports- it needs to use less inputs such as energy and water or find new crops.
- iii) **Energy**- is a key sector. Sweden is planning to be free of the use of crude oil by 2020 and China plans to have 20% of energy provided by renewables in 2 decades. Our present State and Federal targets are too timid.
- iv) **Built environment**- Australians spend almost all of their time in buildings, whether at home or at work- they need to become radically more efficient in their use of energy and water, and need to be retro-fitted given their long lives.
- v) **Transport**- this sector is one of the largest emitters of CO2 and largest consumer of oil products. It is a prime one to 'power down' our use of all energy inputs, by a large focus on public transport and smarter urban planning.
- vi) **Telecommunications**- this sector will soon become one of the larger users of electricity yet may offer new ways of working which will assist Australia address the impacts of peak oil.

In conclusion, the STCWA has commenced its own program to address similar issues to that of the proposed *Sustainability Charter*. We have spent that last 3 years advocating the need for governments to be aware of, and act on, the threats posed by imminent peak oil. We no longer believe that our community can continue with no PLAN B so have begun bringing together different community organisations to outline how our community can respond to the current challenges. We look forward to hearing more about the outcomes of your present Inquiry.

Sincerely,



Dr David Worth

Convenor, Sustainable Transport Coalition WA