

**Sustainable Population Australia Inc.**

**Submission**

to

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage**  
concerning

**Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter**

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*‘A sustainable society would not be eroding its resource base, causing serious environmental damage or producing unacceptable social problems. It is clear ... that our present lifestyle does not satisfy any of [the] main criteria [for sustainability]. We are dissipating resources future generations will need, damaging environmental systems, and reducing social stability by widening the gap between rich and poor. In doing so, we are acting irresponsibly. It is possible to move to a sustainable future, but it requires fundamental changes to our values and institutions. There is hope that human systems can change radically very quickly. There is growing global recognition of the need for change. The serious obstacle is the dominant mind-set of decision-makers who don’t recognise the problem, or see the possible solutions as threatening their short-term interests.’ (Ian Lowe AO, Emeritus Professor, Griffith University: ‘Achieving a Sustainable Future’ Chapter 12 (pp. 165-175) from *In Search of Sustainability* Edited by Goldie J, Douglas B and Furnass B, CSIRO Publishing, 2005).*

*‘Humans’ impact on the biosphere is more than a function of mere numbers. ... total impact is equivalent to the product of average individual impact and the number of people in a population. So even if per capita impact stayed the same, a doubling of the population would double the total impact. While this formula is from an environmental perspective, it also has implications for social scientists and economists. For instance, assuming standards of living stay the same, a doubling of the population will require a doubling of infrastructure and services. Those genuinely concerned about sustainability cannot ignore this multiplier effect.’ (Jenny Goldie ‘Population — the great multiplier’ Chapter 11 (pp. 151- 164) from *In Search of Sustainability* by Goldie J, Douglas B and Furnass B, CSIRO Publishing, 2005).*

*‘Most of the social and environmental problems that concern humankind ... are no more than symptoms, the consequences of a single fundamental problem: overpopulation.’ William Stanton (2003) *The Rapid Growth of Human Populations 1750–2000* (p. 15).*

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It is the contention of this submission that the *‘fundamental changes to our values and institutions’* cannot happen quickly enough to achieve sustainability—due to the prevailing political and economic system, not to mention *‘the dominant mind-set of decision-makers’*—unless social and technological changes are accompanied by a stabilised, and then reduced, population.

## Definitions

‘Environment’: the biological conditions in which organisms live, esp. a balanced system.

‘Environmental’: of or relating to the natural environment, its protection and conservation.

‘Ecology’: the branch of biology which treats of the relations between organisms and their environment.

## Recommendations

***Recommendation 1: A Sustainability Charter must facilitate the measurement of change in governmental and political attitudes and values towards environmental and ecological sustainability; that is, measures of the ‘mind set’ of politicians (whether in government or out), senior public servants and other decision-makers at all levels of government.***

***Recommendation 2: The values, attitudes and actions of the Council of Australian Governments with regard to movement towards environmental and ecological sustainability should be systematically evaluated and reported to the Australian public through media independent of governments e.g. the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.***

***Recommendation 3: A system of incentive payments to States and Territories should be designed and implemented in such a way that their progress towards sustainability targets provides substantial motivation to move towards the attainment of those targets, including the measured changes indicated in SPA’s Recommendations 1 and 2 above. Where progress is hampered or thwarted by Commonwealth Government decisions (e.g. the sale of non-renewable resources to domestic or foreign consumers) both the Commonwealth and State governments involved would be ‘fined’ a substantial amount and those amounts would be invested in a sustainability fund administered by an independent coalition of environmental and conservation NGOs to further non-governmental efforts towards sustainability.***

***Recommendation 4: In order to achieve increases in renewable energy, decreases in non-renewable energy, and attainment of other environmental and ecological sustainability targets, government at all levels should develop and adopt a population policy that will make reaching the targets possible.***

***Recommendation 5: Greater credence be given to the Swedish Government’s approach to environmental objectives than to the Western Australian Sustainability Strategy; with regard to the latter, a ‘wait and see’ approach should be adopted, depending on appropriate, adequate and accurate reporting on environmental impacts.***

***Recommendation 6: Whatever the monitoring, measuring and reporting mechanism is to be, the impact of population must be prominent in the causal factors to be considered in the assessment of progress towards sustainability.***

***Recommendation 7: The three levels of government in Australia should collaborate, in consultation with the community, in the establishment of a population policy that takes account of the impact of population on environmental sustainability.***

***Recommendation 8: The Sustainability Charter should make provision for payments to state and local governments according to their measured reduction of population growth initially, and subsequent reduction in absolute numbers of population. Federal, state and local governments allowing population growth should make equivalent payments to a Sustainability Fund controlled by a coalition of environmental and conservation NGOs independent of government.***

***Recommendation 9: Sustainable Population Australia be added to the list of those environmentally concerned organisations to monitor sustainability outcomes in conjunction with the Sustainability Charter. SPA will have special responsibility for monitoring the effects of population upon environmental sustainability.***

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Sustainable Population Australia (SPA) is primarily concerned with environmental and ecological issues within Australia. However, it differs from most other similar groups in Australia in that it recognises the impact of the numbers of humans upon those issues. The position of SPA on impact (or footprint) is characterised by the equation

$$\text{Impact} = \text{Population size} \times \text{Average consumption per person}$$

Thus, prevailing consumption patterns have a greater effect on the environment if more people are indulging in them. Human population multiplies the impact of consumption levels.

The main body of this submission follows the structure of the Discussion Paper.

### **The Sustainability Charter**

It is not clear from the discussion paper whether the Committee intends to focus on ‘environmental and ecological sustainability’ or ‘social and economic sustainability’. While they are not mutually exclusive, each depending upon the other, the locus of emphasis needs to be clarified.

There are three major aspects to sustainability:

1. environment and its ecology
2. Australian society and the world community
3. current economic and political arrangements

World and Australian environments and ecologies are the broadest and most basic foundation upon which the living integrity of the planet is dependent. The humans, both individually and collectively, are vulnerable if the broader sustainers (environment and ecology) are damaged or lacking. While current economic and political arrangements can, and do, interfere substantially with these broader, most important sustainabilities, human kind can survive quite happily under other economic and political arrangements.

Put simply: sustainability of environments and ecologies are paramount; sustainability of societies and communities must be secondary in importance; and sustainability of economies and political arrangements are of relative unimportance for the survival of species (including homo sapiens).

The most realistic strategy for ensuring environmental and ecological sustainability is to start with the economic and political arrangements, progress to the population numbers (societies and communities), and persist with the concomitant technical and educational processes that have a direct effect on the natural environmental and ecological systems.

In sum: the political and economic arrangements must enable an eventual marked reduction in the impact of human numbers in order to achieve environmental and ecological sustainability.

If any reader doubts the veracity of this analysis, a look at [Attachment 1](#) will illustrate the situation. Here we have the Queensland government colluding with developers and other parties to implicate the burgeoning population of south-east Queensland in the rape of the area's environment. Nobody is to 'blame' in the strict sense of the term, for all parties are caught up in a system they are unable or unwilling to prevent. However, insofar as the problem can be prevented, it can most readily be done by (a) changing the political goals and priorities of the Queensland government (via altering the mind-set of the Premier and related decision-makers, or replacing them with politicians of a more far-sighted bent), (b) then stemming the tide of aspiring residents (the population), and (c) implementing—for what is left of the environment and ecology—strict guidelines for the preservation and rehabilitation of south-east Queensland's habitat. See [Attachment 1](#).

***Recommendation 1: A Sustainability Charter must facilitate the measurement of change in governmental and political attitudes and values towards environmental and ecological sustainability; that is, measures of the 'mind set' of politicians (whether in government or out), senior public servants and other decision-makers at all levels of government.***

### **Sustainable Cities and Other Reports**

The recommendations quoted from the *Sustainable Cities* report misunderstands the need for population decrease if sustainability targets are to bring about an appreciable improvement to environmental problems in Australia. This is because each individual's impact upon the environment is multiplied by the number of humans exerting that impact. The recommendations also fail to recognise that it is not sufficient to focus solely on urban Australia. The integrity of the continent as a whole must be the concern of a Sustainability Commission and of the Council of Australian Governments.

Recommendation 1 of the *Sustainable Cities* report proposes the creation of an Australian Sustainability Charter that sets key national targets across a number of areas. The recommendation lists only five such areas, but implies (through the use of the word 'including') that these are only indicative and that the Charter would set national targets in other areas as well. One of those areas is outlined in Recommendation 1 of the present submission. Others—necessary if sustainability targets are to be achieved—include

- (i) reductions in population and a more sustainable distribution of Australia's population across the continent,
- (ii) reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and

- (iii) land clearing reductions.

The *Sustainable Cities* report also recommends that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) be 'encouraged' to agree to the Charter and its key targets. There is already the precedent of the May 1992 Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE) as well as the National Headline Sustainability Indicators (NHSI). So, on the face of it, COAG should have no difficulty endorsing a Sustainability Charter. However, COAG is ultimately responsible to the Australian public. Therefore COAG's own performance should be evaluated and reported to the public through an independent reporting mechanism.

***Recommendation 2: The values, attitudes and actions of the Council of Australian Governments with regard to movement towards environmental and ecological sustainability should be systematically evaluated and reported to the Australian public through media independent of governments e.g. the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.***

Recommendation 3 of the *Sustainable Cities* report proposes *inter alia* that the proposed Sustainability Commission 'explore the concept of incentive payments to the States and Territories for sustainability outcomes'. Such incentive payments should also be made contingent upon progress in the first two of SPA's recommendations above, always provided the outcome of measures of State and Territory progress towards the targets are not thwarted by Commonwealth Government decisions.

***Recommendation 3: A system of incentive payments to States and Territories should be designed and implemented in such a way that their progress towards sustainability targets provides substantial motivation to move towards the attainment of those targets, including the measured changes indicated in SPA's Recommendations 1 and 2 above. Where progress is hampered or thwarted by Commonwealth Government decisions (e.g. the sale of non-renewable resources to domestic or foreign consumers) both the Commonwealth and State governments involved would be 'fined' a substantial amount and those amounts would be invested in a sustainability fund administered by an independent coalition of environmental and conservation NGOs to further non-governmental efforts towards sustainability.***

The Discussion Paper's reference to substantially increasing the Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) as part of the way to increase market demand for and supply of renewable energy is supported by SPA. However, such increased targets should be matched by substantially decreasing the market demand for and supply of non-renewable energy. It is SPA's considered position that the major way such substantial decreases can be achieved is by reducing Australia's population. In the immediate future this can be done by stabilising the present population, then doing the necessary planning based on lower numbers of people, then gradually but markedly reducing the population to levels consistent with the continent's environmental and ecological sustainability. Such a strategy is known as a governmental population policy.

***Recommendation 4: In order to achieve increases in renewable energy, decreases in non-renewable energy, and attainment of other environmental and ecological sustainability targets, government at all levels should develop and adopt a population policy that will make reaching the targets possible.***

SPA, in addition to the four recommendations outlined above, endorses the approach taken by the Swedish Parliament in which the aim is to set targets that will provide solutions to current environmental issues, to measure the progress towards its objectives and to monitor that progress through a system of public reporting. Because of this public reporting, if for no other reason, the objectives are couched in plain language that the public can understand.

On page 8 of the Discussion Paper, under the heading 'National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development', there is discussion of concepts put forward in the 1987 Brundtland Report (*Our Common Future*). A close inspection of some of these concepts is warranted.

First, of course, is the question of whether the term 'sustainable development' is an oxymoron (a seeming contradiction). Let that pass. More important is the statement '*the current patterns of economic growth could not be sustained without significant changes in attitudes and actions*'. It is pretty clear that what is intended here (and unfortunately adopted in this country) is that 'economic growth' must be sustainable. According to the Discussion Paper, '*the aspirations and values of the Australian people and the prevailing patterns of economic production and consumption*' have produced Economically Sustainable Development (ESD)

So, here can be seen the hidden message of government: sustainable development does not really mean environmental and ecological sustainability; it really means economic (and by implication, political) sustainability.

Let us look more closely at some further statements on page 8. '*ESD means using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources to that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and quality of life for both present and future generations is increased... The key to ESD is integrating environment and development considerations in decision-making.*' Here is the classic lip service to real sustainability.

Those who believe that the Australian people will voluntarily reduce their standard of living in order to achieve genuine sustainability are 'whistling in the wind'. As is illustrated in the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, what is really intended is 'business as usual' with some tinkering around the environmental and social edges to give the appearance of being interested in real sustainability.

The broader Australian public has not yet been educated to the need for both population reduction and lifestyle changes in order to achieve a sustainable environment and, through that sustainability, to achieve a social and economic sustainability.

The WA Strategy and, regrettably, the Committee's Discussion Paper are hindering that public understanding. The contradiction in the position taken in those documents is nicely illustrated by the characterisation of the WA Government's position as being '*to meet the needs of current and future generations through integrating environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity*'. These fine-sounding 'motherhood' statements camouflage the fact that, if the population's current and future economic prosperity is to be maintained, perhaps even improved, then the environmental impact (footprint) can only be reduced by reducing the number of people impacting at that level. See the equation on page 2 of this submission.

It is naïve to suggest that the WA Government's Sustainability Strategy focuses on 'agency activity' in order to demonstrate government's leadership role. Its real purpose is more likely to keep any 'transition to a sustainable future' in the hands of government politicians, the

motives of whom are suspect. This sceptical view of government motives is reinforced by the following concerning the WA Sustainability Strategy: *'The Strategy proposes a set of sustainability principles that guide how government, industry and communities think about and approach the management of resources. These principles are aimed at facilitating change that has net social, environmental and economic benefit for current and future generations.'* One would want to know the exact nature and degree envisaged for 'economic benefit' before making a judgement as to whether such benefit is compatible with 'environmental benefit'. The current, recent and planned track record of Australian governments in this regard suggests extreme scepticism is in order.

One has only to critically examine the foundation principles listed on pages 9 and 10 of the Discussion Paper to justify misgivings:

- decision-making that integrates short- and long-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations --- it sounds good, but will require a detailed explanation as to how it would be implemented before the sceptical critic could be satisfied;
- the global dimension of actions and policies should only be 'recognised and considered', but with no suggestion that they be acted upon;
- development of a strong, growing and diversified economy
- maintain and enhance international competitiveness

The last two dot points look like 'escape clauses' that are incompatible with genuine environmental sustainability (unless, perhaps, population was so small that the total impact on the environment was nugatory, enabling sustainability to be achieved). The Discussion Paper notes that *'social and economic aspects of sustainability have rarely been included'* in past sustainability strategies. And that is with good reason. SPA and other groups will be able to judge whether scepticism is warranted if appropriate and accurate reporting is carried out over the first decade of the WA Strategy's implementation.

***Recommendation 5: Greater credence be given to the Swedish Government's approach to environmental objectives than to the Western Australian Sustainability Strategy; with regard to the latter, a 'wait and see' approach should be adopted, depending on appropriate, adequate and accurate reporting on environmental impacts.***

### **National State of the Environment Reporting**

Since the effects of population are not mentioned in the Committee's Discussion Paper it is probable that the 2006 State of the Environment Report (referred to on page 11) ignores population (the multiplier of consumption/impact) as a *'major causal factor... influencing Australia's environment and heritage'*.

It may well be that the State of the Environment reporting mechanism would be suitable to provide benchmarking and monitoring data as one means of measuring sustainability progress under the Sustainability Charter. However, it will fall short if it fails to measure aspirational targets for the stabilisation, then reduction, of Australia's population, particularly in distorted urban settings such as the Wollongong/Sydney/Newcastle/Central Coast conurbation and the south-east Queensland region. Environmental sustainability leads to social sustainability only when the life-support systems of the broader whole flourish. Heavy population impacts—especially on the well-recognised fragile nature of the Australian continent—deplete non-renewable resources, destroy or permanently damage the natural environment and its ecology, and will eventually lead to a situation that precludes even any reasonable economic viability.

Needed is a determined strategy to slow Australia's population growth in order to stabilise the population, and then to gradually reduce the population to environmentally sustainable levels. Lacking a population policy along these lines, the UN prediction of a 38 per cent increase in Australia's population by 2050 will negate any sustainability strategy that sets genuine targets, as distinct from targets that serve as political 'window dressing' (see [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)).

Either we live more simply and frugally (a prospect that is unlikely until it is forced upon us through resource depletion) or we reduce the numbers impacting Australia's fragile environment and ecology. Since a drop in consumption is unlikely—and is clearly not on the agenda of Australian governments or their beneficiaries in the private sector—the only way to move towards sustainability is through reducing the number of consumers.

***Recommendation 6: Whatever the monitoring, measuring and reporting mechanism is to be, the impact of population must be prominent in the causal factors to be considered in the assessment of progress towards sustainability.***

***Recommendation 7: The three levels of government in Australia should collaborate, in consultation with the community, in the establishment of a population policy that takes account of the impact of population on environmental sustainability.***

### **The National Competition Council**

The Discussion Paper (pages 12 and 13) suggests the responsibilities of all levels of government should be linked to accountability and funding: a Sustainability Commission could pay those governments that meet or exceed targets set in the Sustainability Charter. SPA endorses this mechanism but points out that—because population is a multiplier of impact—the mechanism must also apply to population. For example, payments to state and local governments would be based on the percentage reduction in population growth initially, then the reduction in population in absolute terms subsequently. Conversely, governments allowing population growth to increase would make payments to a Sustainability Fund controlled by a coalition of environmental and conservation NGOs independent of government.

***Recommendation 8: The Sustainability Charter should make provision for payments to state and local governments according to their measured reduction of population growth initially, and subsequent reduction in absolute numbers of population. Federal, state and local governments allowing population growth should make equivalent payments to a Sustainability Fund controlled by a coalition of environmental and conservation NGOs independent of government.***

### **Examples of Monitoring of Sustainability Outcomes**

The two examples of organisations to provide ongoing monitoring of sustainability outcomes in conjunction with the Sustainability Charter do not mention the impact of population. Therefore it will be entirely appropriate for the Sustainable Population Australia to be added to the organisations involved in the ongoing monitoring, having particular responsibility for the monitoring of the role of population on sustainability.



***Recommendation 9: Sustainable Population Australia be added to the list of those environmentally concerned organisations to monitor sustainability outcomes in conjunction with the Sustainability Charter. SPA will have special responsibility for monitoring the effects of population upon environmental sustainability.***

### **Ecological Footprint**

Amazingly, although the Discussion Paper gives the classic definition of ‘ecological footprint’ and applies it to Australia and Sydney, it manages to discuss these ideas without once mentioning the word ‘population’ (except in one of the quotes). This would be humorous if it were not such an egregious omission. The three quoted passages on pages 14 and 15 of the Discussion Paper make it abundantly clear that the impact of people’s ecological footprint is multiplied by the number of people involved. So, the self-imposed blind spot of the author(s) of the Discussion Paper speaks volumes.

### **Sustainability Objectives and Their Measurement**

Since most of the issues with which this submission needs to deal have already been covered, only selected material in the balance of the Discussion Paper will now be taken up.

To the question of whether the Charter be integrated into all levels of government decision making (page 16) SPA considers that it would be desirable, although it will be dependent on the particular factor being measured. For example, while a population policy and the retardation and eventual reversal of population growth is clearly a responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, the distribution of population over a particular state is the province of the State governments. Local government becomes involved chiefly through the approval and encouragement of development applications for housing and business.

To the question ‘*Will there be a cost / gain to the economy by introducing the target(s)?*’ the answer will depend on the type of cost or gain one has in mind. From a short-term financial point of view there will almost certainly be a cost, particularly if Australia stops depleting its non-renewable resources (e.g. coal, natural gas, uranium) by selling them off to create unsustainable ecologies off shore. The big long-term gain is to the environment when there are only the number of consumers who can live sustainably with renewable resources.

Objectives applicable to the built environment (page 17) include the reduction in new housing as the population stabilises and later reduces.

Sweden’s statements about water (page 17) seem straight forward by comparison with Western Australia’s somewhat equivocal approach (page 18). WA’s objective to ‘*reduce water consumption*’ is at odds with its goal of protecting water-dependent ecosystems ‘*while allowing for the management and development of water resources to meet the needs of current and future users*’. If WA’s population continues to grow it is unlikely that water consumption can be reduced. The real strategy is revealed in WA’s plan to ‘*investigate long-term innovative water supply options that have broad sustainability outcomes*’.

Where Sweden intends to ‘*reduce total energy use*’, WA plans to reduce ‘*reliance on fossil fuels*’ and increase ‘*reliance on renewable forms of energy*’. But WA does not explain how it

can seriously do this with an increasing population; significantly, WA makes no statement about reducing total energy use.

Similarly, WA hopes for transportation include an increase—instead of a decrease— of transport activity in major centres. Effective public transport will be helpful and, no doubt as oil depletion obliges a total replacement by natural gas, transportation will be sustainable at the cost of exhausting all non-replaceable power sources. WA has been relatively far-sighted in its provision of non-motorised personal transport alternatives.

## Attachment 1

### Queensland to splash out on south-east

Author: Mark Ludlow

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Edition: First

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#### INFRASTRUCTURE

The Beattie government is to launch billions of dollars of projects in a boost to the fast-growing area, says Mark Ludlow.

The Queensland government is due to release up to \$5.6 billion worth of infrastructure projects as potential public private partnerships (PPPs) in the next 12 months, as it begins to roll out its \$55 billion capital works program for the state's south-east corner.

In what is being billed as the largest infrastructure program undertaken in Australia, the 230 new projects are aimed at accommodating the fast-growing Gold Coast-Brisbane-Sunshine Coast region over the next 20 years.

Despite some initial apprehension about using the private sector to build public infrastructure, the Beattie government has conceded it will need PPPs, and possible borrowings, to help build the schools, roads and hospitals in the plan.

Under the guidance of the co-ordinator-general Ross Rolfe, the government has been prioritising the major projects for the first phase of the infrastructure program.

In March, Premier Peter Beattie announced eight projects to be evaluated under the government's value-for-money framework for PPPs in the next 12 months.

These include the airport link tunnel (\$1.5 billion), Toowoomba Range bypass (\$680 million), Springfield to Darra road and rail corridor (\$760 million), the Gold Coast mass transit project (\$490 million) and the Eastern busway (\$530 million). The other projects include a package of schools on the Sunshine Coast (\$791 million), a group of schools down the western corridor to Ipswich (\$315 million) and the Gold Coast mass transit project (\$490 million), and the Eastern busway (\$530 million).

"We do believe in them [PPPs] but they have to stack up really well," Beattie told a business lunch recently. "We are not here to make bankers wealthy, we are here to deliver outcomes for taxpayers."

But with only one PPP, the \$230 million TAFE redevelopment, in Queensland and with a long-awaited review of the government's PPP guidelines still to be released, some industry groups are concerned with the slow pace of the roll-out of projects.

In its pre-budget submission, the Australian Industry Group called on the government to increase its borrowings and fast-track road infrastructure to speed up much-needed projects in the south-east.

The Australian Industry Group's Queensland director, Andrew Craig, says PPPs are a good way to bring forward projects rather than the government doing them alone. The Sunshine State's healthy financial position should also allow them to borrow if needed.

"We wouldn't be at all surprised to see the government borrow in this budget," he told The Australian Financial Review.

Urban Development Institute of Australia's Queensland chief executive, Brian Stewart, conceded there had been teething problems with PPPs in Queensland that would only be rectified by more projects being approved.

"There is a sharp learning curve in implementing PPPs for both the private sector and the government," Stewart says. "The recent statements by the Premier [on PPPs] have been comforting. But we do need to see them operating successfully on the ground in Queensland for them to be seen to work."

But it's not just the slow pace of PPPs which has some industry groups concerned about the government's \$55 billion infrastructure plan. They are also worried about the number of projects pencilled in for the later stages of the 20-year plan, rather than the crucial next five- to 10-year period.

With 1500 people moving to Queensland every week, including 700 people from interstate, industry groups say the next decade is crucial in providing new infrastructure and jobs for the new residents.

Under the accompanying south-east Queensland regional plan or urban footprint, the Beattie government is aiming to push 250,000 people off the popular coastal strip and down the western corridor towards Ipswich.

Though this may directly challenge the southerner's dream of having a Queenslander near the beach when they move north, the government believes the law of supply and demand will dictate where people buy.

Stewart agrees that the government's western option will work provided there is adequate infrastructure, services and jobs for those that leave the coast.

The government's ability to tackle the state's on-going skills shortage, which has been exacerbated by the need to rebuild after Cyclone Larry in Far North Queensland, will also be crucial to the success of the infrastructure plan.

The government recently announced a planned revamp of the TAFE system to allow shortened apprenticeships to help with the skills shortfall.

"There's going to be huge challenges to ensure we have enough appropriately skilled people to deliver what is an ambitious plan," Stewart says.

"But what is going to be the biggest challenge is the monitoring of the growth on the ground and modifying the plan to actually provide the infrastructure that the community needs."

## **Plotting a course**

- \* The government has a \$55 billion capital works program for the state's south-east corner.
- \* A total of 230 new projects are aimed at accommodating the fast-growing Gold Coast-Brisbane-Sunshine Coast region in the next 20 years.
- \* The Australian Industry Group has called on the government to increase its borrowings and fast-track road infrastructure.