

17 May, 2006

Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Canberra 2600

INQUIRY INTO A SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER: SUBMISSION

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for allowing late submissions to the Inquiry. Since I consider that sustainability is the pre-eminent issue facing society, I strongly support the establishment of an Australian Sustainability Commission and Australian Sustainability Charter.

I make the following points:

- **Criteria.** Underlying ESD are three essential criteria. Firstly, renewable resources (e.g., timber, fish) must be used at rates not exceeding the rates of regeneration. Secondly, non-renewable resources (e.g., oil, minerals) must be used at rates not exceeding the rate of finding renewable substitutes and third, the disposal of wastes must not exceed the assimilative capacity of the environment. Failure to meet these conditions causes a fall in ecological capital and life-support capacity. Consequently, these criteria provide the essential basis for goal-setting, strategy development and reporting in the Charter. However, the Discussion Paper does not address these criteria.
- **Population Growth.** In considering the factors influencing Australia's environment and sustainability, it must be acknowledged that environmental impact = per capita impact x population size i.e. population is a multiplier and cannot be ignored. Sustainability policy cannot effectively proceed without a population policy as recommended by the inquiry chaired by Barry Jones and by scientists (Australian Academy of Science). This policy should be cognizant of limits (carrying capacity) and desirability (optimum population). As

well, population growth does not enhance per capita economic growth (much less human wellbeing) and is a major threat to sustainability.

- **Economic Growth.** A second major threat to sustainability is “the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy...” (p.10). Economic growth causes a fall in ecological capital and promotes disorder in the environment (second law of thermodynamics). The claim that economic growth is needed for sustainability is refuted by Herman Daly (ex World Bank economist) and Kenneth Arrow (Nobel Laureate in economics).
- **Ecological Primacy.** Since ecosystems provide life-support for humans, their protection should be accorded primacy over economic and societal considerations in triple bottom line planning. As part of this, the onus principle should be applied i.e., proponents of development must demonstrate that their proposals comply with sustainability principles.

I wish the Inquiry success in helping to achieve ecological sustainability in Australia.

Yours truly,

A.R.Jones