

May 12th, 2006

Secretary
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Secretary: *Rob Little*

RECEIVED

24 MAY 2006

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Dear Sirs,

Inquiry Into a Sustainability Charter

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide a submission to your inquiry into a Sustainability Charter.

Eco-Society and Sustainnovation are collaborating organisations and we support the development of an integrated charter that delivers widespread engagement based on measurable outcomes and intermediate milestones.

The key points of our submission are:

- The House of Representatives Standing Committee's chosen five elements are missing several key variables
- There is a greater need to demonstrate a holistic approach to Sustainability by engaging people and by highlighting the socio-economic aspects and impacts.
- One of the most significant is the Sustainable Consumption and Production area..
- It's as though the elements are holding themselves up though in reality they are all dependent on people and our collective actions and behaviours.
- Although there are many community programs they are often ineffective for two main reasons.
- Firstly they are not clearly capturing the essence of what is required of people and usually come under the guise of a 'Green' campaign. Yet green doesn't have meaning or relevance to the social.
- Secondly there is an overwhelming amount of 24/7 global communication which causes a lot of noise and in many cases people are overwhelmed and switch-off. This is where so called awareness campaigns have their downfall.
- Furthermore the clutter of lots of disparate messages makes it hard for people to focus on the key connectors.
- Consistent with the above finding is the need for the creation of a Market Category in Sustainable Action which will facilitate the engagement of people.

- The framework proposed in our submission assumes that engaging of people is primary in understanding their behaviour and actions, and in achieving overall sustainable value for all..

We look forward to further consultation and to providing any assistance on this matter. With that in mind if you should have any questions regarding the content of our submission, please do not hesitate to contact Sophie Constance on (03) 9531 9364 or 0413 425 405.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Constance

Submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage

Inquiry into a Sustainability Charter

This submission is in response to the Committee's Terms of Reference, and addresses omissions in integral key elements of any proposed Sustainability Charter.

As we understand it the Sustainability Charter is to be based on measurable outcomes over a certain period with intermediate milestones.

The chosen elements include:

1. The Built Environment
2. Water
3. Energy
4. Transport
5. Ecological footprint

The key points of our submission

The idea of a National Sustainability Commission is an excellent idea and we would support its introduction as quickly as possible.

After our eight years in the area globally, it is evident that the United Kingdom have been achieving some wonderful progress, and are leading in the practical exploration and application of integrating sustainability into and across the diverse areas of society. Yet their all encompassing driver has been focused on engaging people.

We need a comprehensive National Sustainability strategy including several key elements which are more holistic or integrated in focus. All of the listed elements are dependent on people and their behaviour and actions. Therefore, the Commission would benefit from an additional three elements which would serve as the founding pillars upon which the other elements are built.

1. Sustainable Consumption and Production
2. Corporate Responsibility
3. Human Rights and Social Equity

Recommendations

- Establish an integrated and independent Sustainability commission like the British one created by Prime Minister Blair.
- Define the core purpose of the commission similarly to inspire all citizens to become involved.
- This is beyond rhetoric, piece meal approaches and tactical programs.
- Introduce a key directional element which underpins all the other five elements.
- That being Sustainable Consumption & Production.

This should be the crux of all other elements as it underpins everything we as people do through our consuming patterns both privately and in business.

By working with people we begin the buy-in process so that the Sustainability area doesn't just become a corporate or resource or building thing led by government. It aims to provide ownership by the people who recognise their role in society and how they can contribute.

More specifically the UK experience has leading research and development on all types of consumption patterns and ways to intercept by affecting behaviour change. Sustainability communications and behaviour change are a different dynamic to normal communication.

Overwhelmingly all businesses promote their wares and in the process adds to the noise created global mayhem.

Furthermore the area of Sustainability isn't even being promoted in the public conscious.

We need to develop this area as 'Market Category' or sector. Unfortunately at present we are pseudo sector termed 'Green'. That has been stretched in every which way and is really not sufficient in capturing the essence of the Term. It doesn't cover the Social Sustainability elements, nor does it have the soul which people can relate to broader lifestyles.

Furthermore business and stock analysts will not seriously work with businesses termed 'green'. The term itself has negative connotations of inferiority or lesser substance.

A bold integrated all encompassing direction is required which establishes the framework for the other elements.

Current Sustainability Strategies

- Predominantly SD strategies are 'supply' driven meaning they are sustainable product and services are usually without creating the demand for these in advance. Doing the latter is a wiser move as it does just what was mentioned above, in that it creates the buy-in and development early enough to bring people along with the developmental aspects.
- Meanwhile we live in a cluttered global economy and the overwhelming amount of advertising communications collectively results in a lot of noise, People become bombarded, overwhelmed and switch off. From there the communicated ideas usually end up ignored, wasted or in the bin.
- There goes all the hard work and money in creating wonderful communications campaigns, which don't even, reach people.
- Engagement is essential when marketing this whole Sustainability sector.
- A Market Category underpinned by 'Sustainable Consumption and Production' is an effective way forward as demonstrated by other countries who share in this category. For example UNEP.