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Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Reference: Employment in the environment sector

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE
Thursday, 14 November 2002

Members: Mr Billson (*Chair*), Ms George (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Barresi, Mr Cobb, Mr Hunt, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Mr Lindsay, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur.

Members in attendance: Mr Billson, Mr Cobb, Ms George, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Mr Lindsay and Ms Livermore

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

- The current contribution of environmental goods and services to employment in Australia;
- The future potential growth, including barriers and opportunities for growth, of environmental goods and services and impact on employment;
- Current status and future requirements for an appropriately skilled workforce;
- Appropriate policy measure that could encourage the further development of the environmental goods and services sector; and
- Information and reporting systems that would support the uptake of environmental goods and services to enhance overall business performance and development of the sector.

WITNESSES

| | |
|--|-----------|
| BELL, Mrs Slawka, Executive Director, Environment Institute of Australia..... | 43 |
| HAYLOCK, Mr Bill, Member, National Executive, Environment Institute of Australia..... | 43 |
| LEANE, Mr William, Executive Manager, Barton Group..... | 43 |

Committee met at 11.11 a.m.

BELL, Mrs Slawka, Executive Director, Environment Institute of Australia

HAYLOCK, Mr Bill, Member, National Executive, Environment Institute of Australia

LEANE, Mr William, Executive Manager, Barton Group

CHAIR—I thank representatives of the Barton Group and the Environment Institute of Australia for, firstly, your joint submission and, secondly, making your time available today. I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage inquiry into employment in the environment sector. This hearing is the third for the inquiry. Today the committee will receive evidence from the Barton Group and the Environment Institute of Australia. Do you have anything to add regarding the capacity in which you are appearing today?

Mr Leane—I am the executive director of the Barton Group, which is the group charged under the government's Environment Industry Action Agenda with implementing the industry recommendations of that action agenda.

Mrs Bell—I am the executive director of the Environment Institute of Australia. The institute represents the profession of environmental practitioners.

CHAIR—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House. It is customary to remind witnesses before they provide testimony that the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Do you wish to make a brief statement in relation to your submission or some introductory remarks before committee members ask questions of you?

Mrs Bell—We would all like to. I might go first, if that is all right. Mr Chairman and the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today to present to you. The Environment Institute of Australia's issues regarding the inquiry are diverse. In particular, they focus on the inquiry into the environment sector and, in particular, the current status of future requirements for an appropriately skilled work force. So that is the line we are focusing on.

We consider that without a work force that is appropriately skilled, the environment sector will not be able to contribute as a major industry in the economy. Our partner in this submission, the Barton Group, which is an alliance of industry leaders who are charged with the responsibility of delivering certain aspects of the Environment Industry Action Agenda, are here with us today because the Environment Institute of Australia identified that there were three major aspects that the Barton Group was promoting from one of its publications. There is the promotion of accounting and reporting, the promotion of clusters and collaborative networks, and the development of an export strategy. We approached the Barton Group to see whether they would consider joining us in researching the major issue, as we saw it, within our industry, which was the certification process of the industry. As it turned out, simultaneously your inquiry started. So it was decided that we would provide a joint submission.

The Environment Institute of Australia was established in 1987. It was established to serve environment practitioners around Australia. It is multidisciplinary. It focuses on a membership base which encompasses many layers—architects, landscape architects, scientists, planners, engineers, educators, advisers, consultants and government officers. Recently the 14th national conference identified through a workshop that certification of the profession was the most critical issue facing the profession. As mentioned in our submission, the professional indemnity issue was also of major concern. In recent meetings with insurance companies, certification has been identified as a clear asset to the risk management of practising consultants within the profession. A submission has also been made to Senator Coonan in relation to our problems within the environment sector. Some of our consultants have had their renewals increase by 50 to 200 per cent, and sometimes they cannot acquire insurance at all. So we see the certification process as part of the insurance problem.

EIA member services are mainly professional development, starting with the peer reviewed *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, a concise newsletter that focuses mainly on regulation and legislation, a student mentor program and an Australia-wide face to face professional development process. Last Thursday, at the EIA AGM, the formalisation of a decision made by the New Zealand environmental practitioners to join EIA was celebrated. We are very happy about that. After many months of negotiation, it was agreed that in the institute's 15th year the institute would become an international body, with New Zealand joining, and change to the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand. That was as of last week. The New Zealand group recognised that a strong, well-educated national human resource was a key factor in environmental results. The EIA currently assists in providing that benchmark performance for Australian environment practitioners through its membership and post-nominal status. The fact that we are interdisciplinary and a not for profit organisation serving the needs of professionals as specialists and as contributors within the broader sphere of environment was recognised. The institute does not receive any assistance to operate other than from member fees. So in its 15 years it basically has survived on that and done an excellent job, mostly with the assistance of honorary officeholders.

The EIA has recently submitted a paper to Minister Kemp in relation to the future of certification of the environment profession, asking for assistance in the certification process. This paper will also be presented to state governments and some of the private sector. It is a paper that is available to the committee if they so wish.

In closing, in a recent newsletter from the Canadian Institute for Business and the Environment, it was stated that the Canadian environment industry is the fourth largest major industry sector in Canada. It employs more people than the steel industry. It employs more people than the chemical manufacturing industry. The environment industry in Canada has been growing at an average of four per cent per year over the last decade. According to new statistics in the Canada biannual report entitled *Environment industry survey business sector 2000*, the environment industry sector generated \$14.4 billion in revenues in the year 2000. It employs over 159,000 people in Canada and yet is primarily composed of small business.

The point in presenting that is that the Canadian government has invested over five years of research and development in the Canadian certification process. The EIA is a natural professional association to deliver such a process, but we need assistance to learn from Canada to create an Australian model and to be able to take this certification paper and develop it

further. There are many areas that need urgent attention. We would be happy to provide a copy of both the paper delivered at the conference and the submission to Minister Kemp.

CHAIR—If you could, that would be appreciated.

Mrs Bell—I thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation.

Mr Haylock—First of all, I would like to thank you for actually having this inquiry. When I started in the environmental management game in the mid- to late-1970s, it was very lonely out there. There were only a few of us. In fact, I could almost identify the 300 or 400 of us that were doing environmental management around Australia. Most of us, as you would not be surprised, were involved in the mining industry. In essence, we are a young profession. It is a young industry. We would not be more than 30 years old. The studies at universities are less than 25 years old. We are quite young in that respect. When I said there were 300 or 400 of us, today there are literally thousands. We have no idea of the number of people in the environment industry.

In Queensland, the Sustainable Industries Division of the EPA, under Dr John Cole, did a survey to try to identify for Queensland the extent of the industry in terms of dollars and cents. The survey was never finished, but what was created was an actual scope of who should be in that survey to identify the players, the industries and the businesses. They looked at the ABS data and other things. It went to the extent of saying, 'Okay. If you produce a muffler, what are you doing? You are reducing emissions and noise.' Clearly, that is an environmental business. So there were a number of factors like that. I am sure that Dr John Cole at the Queensland EPA would be happy to provide the scope of what the study was going to look at.

I have a couple of other points about skilling the work force. They concern credibility and accountability. Right now, in Australia, anyone in this room—the Hansard operators or the security staff—can lodge an environmental management plan. Anyone in this room can lodge an environmental management system. There is no accountability as to who can lodge what. We have some regulation for contaminated land. We have a Standards Australia process for the certification of some auditing. But, in general, is it honest data? Has it been collected adequately? Will it give us the knowledge to put the management plans in place? We cannot actually tick off on that. There are no processes in place in Australia.

Most of us will employ great graduates with degrees or people with experience. However, right now any of us in this room can lodge any form of environmental document for approval or submission. It is quite frightening. There is no accountability on the quality that we are actually producing. In fact, the environment industry practitioners are now calling EISs 'grey literature'—that is our terminology—because we cannot be guaranteed of the quality of its outcome or the input that produced it. So it is a little frightening.

In that respect, it also rolls on to people coming forward with new technologies. Where is the scrutiny? Where is the accountability? How can we actually check that what is being said is being said and is being put in the marketplace in the right way? There is an enormous number of technologies out there. I will come back to that shortly.

The third point I want to make is that there is no doubt in my mind—I have been in the business for a long time; I have had my consultancy for 17 years—that the major driver is still

environmental legislation for people doing anything. I can give you examples at the top end of people who are leading the way in terms of product stewardship, being accountable and open in their public reporting and sustainable reports and doing some wonderful things. There are some magnificent examples at the top end. But when you come back to the bulk of industry and business, there is one driver, and that is legislation. If we want a benchmark to understand what has been happening, all we need to do is look to Europe and look at what has happened. The European Commission have created the BAT process—best available techniques. It involves 32 industry groups. They have had working groups all around Europe. They have created 800- and 900-page documents. There are issues for every industry. They have also identified the best available technique for that industry based on what is acceptable. That is the new benchmark. Within seven years, the documents will be upgraded. At the end of that seven years, if you do not comply, your business is not likely to remain. So they have actually upped the ante.

If we look at the technologies, we have some amazing technologies that have been developed here. But they are not being used because there are not the drivers to do so. In other words, we actually could minimise the majority of our environmental problems today. We have the answers. There are some big ticket issues that we have to deal with. For the bulk of them we have the answers, but we do not actually have the incentive to do so on a legislative framework.

In terms of education, our tertiary system is really quite brilliant. We are producing some wonderful graduates. We have courses in something like 30 to 36 universities. There are different courses at those universities. We have no lack of people that we need to employ. They come out well educated. They understand what they are doing. At that professional level, we have that knowledge and expertise.

There are a couple of areas where we are a little short. At the top end of management, we have some CEOs who actually acknowledge ESD as their new way of doing business, but we have quite a slab of middle or senior management that are the asset managers. They have to produce the dollars. They have employment issues and occupational health and safety issues. They have environmental issues. They are between a rock and a hard place. They have not gone through any cultural awareness or change and they have not been given the tools to do the job. That is quite a blockage in Australian industry at the moment. It is a severe blockage.

The second area, which is probably a little more frightening right now, is that those people in the work force—the operators who potentially can pollute or contaminate—are at risk. They have not been educated. The education system there is very poor. They have a little bit of awareness but they have not been educated in spills management, waste management, hazards management, erosion sediment control management and all the areas where they can pollute or contaminate. They do not have the tools to do the job. I think that sums it up. I will leave it there.

Mr Leane—I work with ACTEW corporation and I am standing in here for Paul Perkins, who has been a leader in this area for some years and who sends his apologies because he cannot be here today. We in ACTEW are in a strange position. We are the smallest of the big utilities. We are the ones who have the fire in our belly most of all. In an industry where there may be five or less than five utilities, we are No. 24 or 23. So we have to radically change our spots.

About 10 years ago, we decided to reposition ourselves to stay alive, to survive. We decided to reposition ourselves as environmental managers. We no longer just deliver commodities of electricity and water. We have to deliver on sustainability to our population to remain alive. In doing that, we have outsourced our energy supply components to what was a competitor and now alliance partner. We have also outsourced our network management to gain an efficient network manager. We are in the process of outsourcing a lot of our retail technology functions to, again, an external partner with economies of scale. The issue then becomes how we become serious environmental managers with a strong connection to the industry and a big asset base. That is the reason why we choose, and have been chosen, to take this leadership role by the department.

So we lead the action agenda. The action agenda has an overarching theme of capturing the high ground and four subthemes. The overarching theme of capturing the ground has a big impediment in the definition of the environment industry, which is essentially treating threats and hazards to the environment or, in a traditional view, cleaning up somebody else's waste. Now if you are on the back foot and you see yourself in the environment industry as simply dealing with somebody else's rubbish, you will always be yesterday's men looking at yesterday's people—and it has been men rather than men and women. Tomorrow's issues are biodiversity, salinity, climate change, coastal ecosystem collapse, land clearing and so on. It is a long way from clearing up roads and rubbish.

The second area that I would like to talk about, which has the same sort of theme, is that the definition of the environment industry as the ABS deals with it includes water pollution, waste water and so on. The reality is that, as Bill has just said, we in the environment industry are simply backroom people cleaning up rubbish. The real environmental managers in this country are the many tens of thousands of people out there who make policy, write specifications, write work orders, draw up contracts and administer a business every single day. They are, in the main, absolutely unaware of what they are doing. The level of skill and training just is not there. Those people see themselves in a job. Institutionally, the system just gets them to do a job. They ask what their bosses ask of them. They are remote and unconnected to the environmental responsibility they actually discharge.

There are a couple of very serious process flaws in the institutional system we deal with. The first of those is to do with public policy in terms of environmental management and corporate strategy and corporate policy. There appears to be a process failure between government policy and company boards and, in particular, major utilities and similar companies that have a big influence on environmental management, where there is not a suitable mechanism to bring the issues to bear or to bring the instructions down to what the government really wants. Board and company decisions are made almost in isolation, especially on the big strategies. The environment is a big strategic issue for most boards. Board members themselves tend to be a bit remote. There is not a process to engage.

There are two similar tiers of process failure below that. The next is board to senior management. As Bill has said, there is then senior management to process level. There are a couple of simple things we could do there. We would foster a set of exchanges between EPAs and major regulatory authorities with the client industries they are regulating. I would strongly endorse an induction program and a much more grassroots level of environmental management training—maybe a site induction but certainly a job induction. The main thematic areas that we deal with are in metrics.

Mr KERR—Induction for whom?

Mr Leane—For all sorts of employees but in particular trades employees—those who are the real causes and the real managers of the ability to pollute and the ability to conserve resources.

Metrics is a very big area. If it is not measured properly, it will not be taken seriously. The ABS has a very narrow definition of, as I say, the environment industry. The funding of the next round of an ABS survey, which is recommended in the action agenda—I think it is \$1½ million—is an urgent requirement. There is also a need for a parallel study, probably by consultants. It has a broader view. It is more of a scoping study of where the real industry is, where the real decisions are being made and where the real capacity for growth, exports and technology growth are.

Another big thematic area is innovation. We are concerned about the lack of serious knowledge growth in the environment. In this business, the ability to apply serious IT is there. In particular, spatial information seems to be the way. I could go on for a long time, but I had better leave time for questions.

CHAIR—I will open the batting quickly. I am interested in how triple bottom line reporting ideas are reflected in corporate reporting and what its interrelationship is with sustainable or socially responsible investment. Do you think the data available in the marketplace, the decision support systems that analyse what is there and the effort put into properly testing that information, are adequate?

Mr Leane—We are strong supporters of triple bottom line analysis before reporting. The key to it is the analysis, not so much the reporting. And it is important that companies know why they are doing the analysis and for what purpose in the first place. If it is reporting for reporting's sake, clearly it is almost greenwash. To some extent, the existing regulations have been dangled out there saying, 'This is what you have to report to. Once you have reported to them, soon you will learn that this is worthwhile stuff and you should be analysing it a lot more. If you are forced to collect it under legislation, you will be given an incentive to at least have it at your disposal and do some analysis.' The secret to it is the analysis, not so much the reporting, as such. At this stage, except for a small handful of dedicated and a smaller handful of large companies, we do not see the analysis being done.

CHAIR—So even if it started initially as a bolt-on exercise, the awareness that that builds, you think, is an opportunity?

Mr Leane—It will grow eventually. Yes, I think it will gradually get there. But, in a sense, it is a slow way of doing it. It does help the big companies, but it does nothing to help SMEs and smaller companies who at the moment are being encouraged to do the reporting for no good reason without doing the analysis, which is a retrograde step.

Mr Haylock—At the top end, the mining industry is a classic because it has been driven for quite some time. They actually have a code of environmental management that the major mining companies have signed off on—you are probably well aware of it—which is the requirement for public reporting. Some of those groups have gone right out with the whole accountability issue. They bring in a third party auditor. It might be KPMG or Pricewaterhouse

Coopers. They have in their groups environmental professionals that will actually trawl down through the data to check that the data is reputable.

One of the great examples is BHP Billiton Cannington. Mick Roach went to the North Queensland Conservation Council and asked them to write the public report. They were brought in like a third party. So I think certain sectors have been asked to do it by their codes et cetera. But we do not see enough of it in general. A number of them are now moving away from calling it triple bottom line reporting. They are calling it sustainable reporting. In fact, they are now adding the fourth plank of governance. That very much came out of the global mining industry initiative. I think it was touched on in Johannesburg as well.

CHAIR—So rather than having a CPA sign off on the fiscal side of things, you are saying that they are looking for credible players where the brand gives the credibility because there is no verification?

Mr Haylock—That is right. They are looking for forms of verification so they can stand up and say to the public, ‘We have been transparent. Here are our documents.’

Ms GEORGE—You wrote a lot about education, training and workers understanding the outcomes of what they do. I think that at least can be driven from the top level. I am interested in whether environmental science courses are increasingly incorporated in MBA courses and whether there is any kind of integration at that very senior level. Secondly, you said that workers are remote and unconnected. I think there are some parallels with the occupational health and safety area. It seems that one thing they have in that sector is some kind of tripartite arrangement whereby standards can be set. I am not arguing for overly prescriptive regulation. However, there are models and codes of conduct and minimum standards that have to be adhered to and there is reporting within certain parameters and frameworks. Is that a model that might have some relevance to some of the concerns you are addressing? That is, you would have government, workers and managers meeting together to try to articulate some of these basic requirements that you say are rather incoherently expressed.

Mr Leane—If I may, I think that is highly relevant. To answer your first question on the science for MBAs, the issue is not with the science. The science training is probably adequate, from my perspective. I do not think the science is a problem. Most organisations and most people have access to the science at a managerial level if you need it. The issues are further down or further up at a process level. But in terms of the occupational health and safety model, I think there is a lot to be done. I think we probably need different levels for different things. I think at a senior level, we need exchanges between EPAs and their client industries and at a lower level we need the occupational workplace health and safety type training system in the environment and which has an environmental arm in it.

Mrs Bell—I want to comment on the MBA. I am currently studying for an MBA and in no section of that MBA do I see anything on the environment. Maybe some cover it, but a lot do not. The MBA tends to cover four sectors: finance, marketing, IT and a type of HR, which is people management. But it certainly does not focus in those areas on the environment at all. I guess it probably needs to, especially in the finance area, because of the financial reporting. Probably it would do so in IT, if you are involving IT with product and delivering an environmental outcome through an IT product. So there are ways to put it in, but in my experience they have not at this point.

Mr Haylock—I want to comment on the training. I think we have to be quite clear that within an industry or business there are really three levels. You have senior management or corporate management, you have a supervisors level and then an operators level. All three of them actually need different information. The first group look at the big picture, the global influence—why we are heading this way and what that is. The next group actually need to know some of that but also all the tools that the operator is going to need, because they are implementing it or managing it. So there are different training programs to give toolsets to the different levels within the industry or business.

Ms LIVERMORE—We have had evidence from people almost from the supply side. You are talking about the demand side, where you have people operating in business needing to know that they have to go looking for that information on environmental products and services. Assuming that falls into place, what needs to happen on the supply side to make sure that that information is there, it is accessible and it is available when people go looking for it? For example, we heard from the environment directory and EnviroNET and those sorts of organisations. Do you think we are doing enough on that side of the equation to make sure that when people know they have to go looking for that information it is there?

Mr Haylock—I think the more information available to people, the better. The more information you have, the better your outcome or decision is going to be. But in doing that, supplying that data to them, there needs to be a verification of that data, of the product and accountability for it. So if you are going to list it, it should go through a rigorous review for it to actually be listed. I can open up my directory and see these three suppliers. I can be guaranteed that they will do what they say they will do. We have had periods in the environment game where such and such site went and bought this processor because they were told this is what would happen, yet they still have the same environmental outcome today. They have been put off doing anything now because they went down the wrong path, unfortunately. I think there is room for it. As an export industry, that is valued. But we have to have that verification of those services and products.

Ms LIVERMORE—So is the fragmentation of the industry and the fact that it is split amongst a myriad of SMEs a problem in terms of purchasers and businesses sourcing environmental data and environmental goods and services? Is anything happening about that? Can improvements be made on the side of pulling the industry together?

Mr Haylock—I do not quite understand. I will answer it this way. The environment industry is everyone. The day will come when you will not have a separate environment manager at that plant site or in that operation because everybody will be skilled. It will be everyone's job. It is like occupational health and safety. We are in the position where you are on a site and you say, 'You are the environment guy. You deal with it.' You are not taking on the responsibility and you are not understanding what needs to be done. It is too easy to pass the buck. Ultimately, business will have everybody skilled.

In terms of fragmentation, I guess it is because there is probably nowhere that people can get this verification or the structure of what they are supplying. That gets right back to the individuals, the practitioners. We have no ability to say, 'Well, this person has the right skill sets to deliver this for you,' or 'This product will actually achieve that outcome.' So it would actually pull it together if there was some form of process where we could guarantee this is what you are getting. It is a bit like how we have a quality requirement for every piece of

equipment that goes into a car. That car cannot get on the road unless it has gone through all these checks.

Ms LIVERMORE—I have one more question. Mr Haylock, you talked about the process in the EU with the BAT agenda. We questioned one of our earlier witnesses about the regulatory framework within Australia and whether it was meeting needs and whether any of that needed to be beefed up. That is, were the right signals there and were the regulations there? They were quite comfortable. They said, ‘Yes, it is fine. The structure we have right now is okay.’ What is your view of that, given that you have highlighted other examples from overseas?

Mr Haylock—There are two parts to environmental management on a day-to-day basis. One part is getting your approval or your environmental licence to actually operate. That involves a series of documents being submitted showing that you are going to do this and that. You will then be issued with a licence to actually operate. The policing of that licence is something else. Whether that is adequately done or not, and depending at what levels, depends on the various states. Some states are now moving from a highly regulated licensing position back to a more regulated policing position. They are moving their focus and resources to try to achieve better outcomes. But it gets back to that economically. If you are not being policed and being demanded to produce good outcomes, it does not happen. I could take you out right now even around Canberra and show you half a dozen operations and construction sites where there would be a token sediment fence put up when it is probably an erosion issue, not a sediment issue. There is a lack of understanding. They are just not delivering what should be done. That knowledge is so simple and basic.

Mr LINDSAY—Mrs Bell, in your opening statement, you referred to the provision of an appropriately skilled work force. You were saying that there are some concerns about that. I want to ask you about government programs and their contribution to the skilled work force and the environment. The programs I refer to are Green Corps, Green Reserves, and, to a lesser extent, Work for the Dole. What has been your experience with those programs in contributing people ultimately to the work force?

Mrs Bell—Indeed, they do contribute to the knowledge base and the knowledge management of the environment. I guess I was referring to the professional within the industry specifically. The professional’s contribution is all-encompassing in that the professional could be at any level within any industry, within any government department, and our members often are. It is the skilling of those professionals to make sure that they are suitably qualified to deliver the advice and the consulting. Generally speaking, they can sit in the middle or senior management. But they are like the engine driving the particular issue on the day within that organisation. As we go along, not at the level of BHP but much lower, if I could put it that way, all organisations will have an environmental person. When they go in there, they are going to be giving advice. We need to know that that advice is of a level that everyone is very happy with. Unless there is some sort of certification process, the only verification of knowledge at the moment is being a member of the EIA at a member level and at a fellow level. There is nothing else.

Mr LINDSAY—We understand that. You have now clarified what you were saying in relation to an appropriately skilled work force. Thank you.

CHAIR—I have a question about the cultural embrace of the sustainability concept. Is it your view that the Institute of Company Directors should put a greater emphasis on sustainability? Here is the most basic risk management strategy so that they do not end up—

Mrs Bell—I have also done the Institute of Company Directors course. When I did that, the environment section came three months later because it had not been written. This was a couple of years ago. I do not believe they are treating it seriously. I think there is an area there that they could well run with. Perhaps our institute and their institute could work together to do that. Regardless of whether our institute is involved or not, the membership base of the Institute of Company Directors recently has increased tenfold—I am almost sure of that—because of the accounting problems people are having. The information I read is that they are focusing on that issue. However, in the end, it is a level of governance that has to be at board level, and environment needs to be at board level, yes, absolutely.

CHAIR—Are there any closing remarks you would like to leave us with?

Ms LIVERMORE—You talked about the missing link between government policy and government aims and corporate strategy. Obviously the Environment Industry Action Agenda is about trying to bridge that. From your impressions of it over the last 12 months that you have been involved in it, is it really still preaching to the converted or have you found that the EIAA process is contributing to a bit of a groundswell with businesses building their awareness in this area? What is your impression?

Mr Leane—It is contributing. The problem is that there are decision tools out there. There are applications much like there are accounting applications and systems that you could use to do the analysis and get simple results out. Those applications in the business context with environment simply are not there at the moment. We need to spend some money and time developing them. It is easy to talk about sustainability but it is very hard to get your handle on it in terms of numbers and companies. They are the things that business managers and number crunchers can do things with—hard things. We need to go back to grassroots sort of things to make that happen. The techniques are there, but that is where it needs to be.

CHAIR—Operationalise it.

Mr Leane—Operationalise it very much. I will return to one other thing you were saying before about the smaller SMEs. Clusters have a very big place to play. Most of the environment industry is employed by local government, or a large part of it is employed by local government. We really do need some support for benefactors who employ clusters. So it is all very well to seed money to a small cluster and get it up and running where they learn to cooperate to compete, if you like, but where the employer or the company is putting the money up there to get a cluster working, it comes at some cost to that organisation. For small agencies, and in particular people like local government, they just do not have the money to spend on developing their clusters, whereas they are the main employers of those myriad of small players out there. So there is a gap there.

CHAIR—Mrs Bell, do you have any closing remarks?

Mrs Bell—Before we came, we spoke about what framework could be already in place that we could perhaps factor into. That is what we are looking for. I mentioned that a lot of

industries have an industry training board for all the issues that fit under that. We do not have any such body. Obviously, occupational health and safety has a level of structure as well. There is a model. I guess what we are looking for is a model. One of the issues of the certification is that it then factors into that model, but I am not quite sure where it is factoring in at the moment.

CHAIR—If you have any ideas on that, we are quite at the early stage of our work. I compliment you on the way that you have thematically outlined your opening remarks and answered the questions. It has been quite instructive for us. It is not a one-off event. If you have some follow-up contributions to make out of the discussions and some reflections on what has been said, they would be more than welcome. On behalf of the committee, I thank all three of you for making the time available and putting energy into your contribution. It is very much appreciated. We will come back to you on those documents that you mentioned around the certification side of the environment. You might even get a call from our committee secretary about some of the BATs information and Dr Cole's work as well. Thank you for suggesting that.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms George**):

That this committee authorises publication, including publication on the parliamentary database, of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Mrs Bell—Thank you for the opportunity. It was excellent.

Committee adjourned at 11.55 a.m.