



Sustainable Cities 2025

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Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd



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Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025

Growth is inevitable and desirable, but destruction of community character is not. The question is not whether your part of the world is going to change. The question is how.

Edward T. McMahon

Introduction

Western Sydney faces significant planning, environmental and social challenges and is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. Greater Western Sydney has a population of nearly 1.7 million people. This is projected to grow to 2.2 million by 2019, an increase of nearly thirty percent. This rate is faster than that predicted for the whole of the Sydney statistical division and is more than 1.5 times the predicted New South Wales average of nineteen percent.

Western Sydney is a complex urban area that has a dynamic mixture of developing residential zones. These include new greenfields areas along the urban fringe, as well as increasing density of established areas. Western Sydney is Australia's third largest regional economy, following Sydney Central Business District and Melbourne, with one in ten dollars earned in Australia being earned in the region. Greater Western Sydney is home to about one fifth of the State's jobs, but a significantly smaller proportion of "new economy" jobs.

Greater Western Sydney faces significant issues of waste management, water and energy supply versus demand while continuing to grow at a rapid rate. The region is also one of the most stressed environments in Australia, yet still retains significant pockets of great environmental value and significance.

Sustainability is a very broad concept. While relatively easy to conceptualise it has very complex interactions and is often viewed as difficult to implement. The Federal Government should not allow the complexity involved to lead to a situation of 'policy inertia' with little being done to address issues of sustainability in a holistic manner.

One of the most important concepts of sustainability is that it can be implemented at many different scales: individual, local, regional, national or global. The oft repeated slogan "Think globally, act locally" has become something of a 'sustainability mantra' in recent years, to the point that its very real and practical significance is often overlooked. Yet it is this principle that will provide a solid foundation to move forward if coordinated and resourced at a national level.

Federal Government engagement with sustainability issues in major urban centres is necessary to coordinate the long-term impacts on the economy, the environment and society in a positive manner. WSROC welcomes the Federal Government raising urban sustainability issues and the opportunity to provide some input.

1. The Environmental and Social Impacts of Sprawling Urban Development

Environmental and social impacts of urban sprawl are intimately connected. WSROC's longer-term objectives include protecting and enhancing the long-term environmental sustainability of the region for future generations, as well as to work toward the provision of social infrastructure to meet the needs of the region's current and future population while protecting and enhancing the region's cultural diversity.

A key issue in managing sustainability is that most of the environmental problems we face are manifested as a result of social, cultural and economic decisions and behaviour. The key issues of concern for the greater Western Sydney region are briefly summarised below.

1.1 Air quality, health and infrastructure planning

Regional air quality is a significant environmental concern in the context of urban expansion in Western Sydney. Western Sydney's topography favours the development of poor air quality under certain conditions. Much of Greater Western Sydney region sits in a basin surrounded by hills and ranges. The development of local winds in response to landform causes air pollutants to become trapped within the Western Sydney basin.

The situation in Western Sydney is exacerbated:

- by the fragmented nature of public transport within the region including poor access or linkages to employment and services within the region;
- by a car dependent culture that partially offsets gains made in improving standards of fuel emissions;
- by the income disparity within the region where clusters of economically disadvantaged drive older, more polluting vehicles or are forced to rely on the few public transport options available;
- by private bus companies in the west competing with Government subsidised State Transit services in the eastern suburbs – higher prices and fewer services are an issue of equity, particularly with pension concessions;
- by the built environment in many areas undermining opportunities for physical activity and contributing to social isolation; and
- by the impact of poor air quality, the built environment, and socio-economic factors on long-term health.

1.2 Energy, planning and lifestyle

Within the region, the demand for energy is growing rapidly with greenfield developments, industrial intensity, commercial development and increasing high-density residential zoning. The housing and commercial sectors are significant energy consumers, particularly due to the rapidly growing use of air-conditioning. The issue of energy demand versus the capacity of the existing network to meet peak demands is a problem of particular relevance to Western Sydney.

The effects of urban sprawl on energy in Western Sydney include:

- a regional energy supply network that is already at capacity and predicting a failure to meet capacity in future unless there is a substantial upgrade of infrastructure;
- lack of embedded energy or local supplies of renewable energy, resulting in most energy being imported into the region;

- the lifestyle trend toward large, open plan house designs with poor insulating ability and affordable air-conditioning placing an unsustainable load on the energy supply networks;
- lack of a market for cost-effective or energy efficient alternatives (appliances, materials, designs, planning) to provide a broader consumer base with which to promote sustainable energy alternatives;
- lack of strategies directed to influencing supplier and consumer choice in a sustainable direction; and
- lack of a regional framework to promote the sustainable energy sector with Local Government in Western Sydney.

1.3 Water cycle management

The recent drought has highlighted the degree to which Sydney residents have traditionally relied on water being available 'on tap'. Urban population growth and increasing domestic water consumption is placing pressure on available water supply. There is an urgent need to manage water consumption and supply to cap demand at current levels in the face of substantial population growth. This needs to be combined with the active promotion and implementation alternative water supplies (such as rain tanks) and systems for the re-use or recycling of water.

A suite of measures is required to be effective – any single approach will not deliver the outcomes required. Water cycle management must account for the competing demands of environmental flows, supply to agriculture in the Sydney basin, stormwater management, salinity, and planning.

This poses questions relating to improved technology, robust policy, and consumer awareness and demand management to improve water efficiency in household, industrial and agricultural sectors in the Sydney basin. Economic measures alone will not work.

The effects of urban sprawl on water management include:

- current demand for water is expected to exceed available supply in the long term;
- lack of incentives within the planning and development process that will trigger sustainable outcomes for water management;
- lack of economic incentives for consumers to purchase water-saving products when purchasing or building a home;
- no broad scale alternative water supply or re-use systems to augment existing dam water supply;
- lack of strategies directed to influencing supplier and consumer choice in a sustainable direction;
- a network of aging and degraded sewerage systems, with the resultant cost of upgrade;
- ongoing issues of contaminated run-off from farmland, affecting water catchments at the peri-urban fringe; as well as ongoing issues of urban runoff and stormwater management;
- an increasing number of households using water intensive appliances such as dishwashers as lifestyle choices become more desirable and affordable with a market that encourages this process; and
- the fragmentation, loss and degradation of riparian vegetation with increasing populations of introduced animal and plant species.

1.4 Biodiversity, land use and planning

Despite substantial urban and agricultural encroachment, significant pockets of biodiversity within Western Sydney remain. However, to maintain these remnant ‘islands’ of biodiversity requires a framework for management within the context of urban natural resource management and urban planning. Biodiversity is managed from national to the local level. However, there is no current framework for coordinating biodiversity at a regional level in urban areas.

According to the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment 2002 (ATBA), the Cumberland Plain is one of the most threatened bioregions in NSW. The Cumberland Plains of the Sydney basin contains the most rapidly developing areas of Greater Western Sydney. The ATBA classifies the Cumberland Plain as a Category 1 bioregion. This means it falls into the highest stress class.

Urban pressures affecting biodiversity in Western Sydney include:

- land clearing for urban expansion, rural residential uses, bushfire protection and infrastructure; with resultant simplification and fragmentation¹ of habitat through edge effects, isolation, fire, pollution, water control structures, weeds, domestic and introduced species and grazing;
- lack of a regional biodiversity framework to coordinate conservation, planning, agriculture and other land uses;
- a need for resources to coordinate long term biodiversity management through mechanisms such as incentives for private landholders, offsets, and improved coordination and access to datasets;
- no coordinated framework for the long-term management of pest species in urban areas (aquatic, terrestrial, arboreal); and
- a failure to ‘sell’ the importance of biodiversity to the broader community.

1.5 Salinity

It is generally recognised that salinity is an issue of prime national importance for Australia to address. Salinity is also an issue in urban areas such as Western Sydney. This has significant implications for asset management, risk, liability, and costs to the community.

The effects of urban sprawl on urban salinity include:

- the potential and actual degradation of natural and built assets and the costs, risk and liability implications for councils and private landholders;
- contribution to urban salinity of current planning regimes, stormwater management, householder behaviour and some water sensitive urban design practices;
- the cost of salinity affected assets to private individuals in a region that contains large clusters of economically disadvantaged communities; and
- a need for national coordination of salinity management efforts including the housing and development industry, especially in relation to the Building Code of Australia.

¹ Fragmented habitats with reduced complexity are vulnerable to degrading processes caused by changes to microclimate, soil structure, and competition with introduced species. In other words, biodiversity is a systems concept: the more complex the system, the more resilient it is to change and better able to withstand external pressures.

1.6 Waste and resource management

Waste management in Western Sydney is implemented at the local level by councils, and the strategy is administered by Resource NSW. It is encouraging that Resource NSW is advocating an approach based on efficient use of resources and maximising reuse and recycling options in preference to disposal.

Key issues for sustainable waste management in the region include:

- the very limited lifespan of existing landfills and limited potential for new landfills in the face of rapid urban population growth;
- the equity issue created by transporting waste from one region to another and ‘dumping it in someone else’s backyard’;
- an underdeveloped market for recyclables; and
- a well-developed cultural mindset that waste is ‘someone else’s problem’.

1.7 Regional environmental datasets

To address sustainability issues in Western Sydney requires a multi-level approach for data management, from the local to regional scales. A critical current weakness in any attempt to address sustainability issues is access to relevant information at appropriate scales.

Unlike much social and economic data, environmental data is highly dispersed throughout many agencies and authorities, and with varying levels of accessibility. Yet, this data is an integral part of sustainable management, needing to be considered in the context of social and economic information. Some nodes attempt to bring these sources of information together, but these are hampered by the limitations of their information sources and poor linkages to social and economic data. Consistent, available, and recent information cannot be guaranteed. As one of the primary land managers in NSW, Local Government and their communities would benefit from access to consistent data useful at the local and regional level.

There is a significant opportunity to address these issues by extending the capability of existing resources to allow the flexible presentation of consistent information at varying regional scales. Datasets that can be presented in terms of catchments, council boundaries, or regional boundaries will provide a significant tool that will assist local, regional and state level land managers.

1.8 Health and Planning

In the Greater Western Sydney region there is considerable variation from one area to another in health and services enjoyed by people. These differences closely reflect the difference in socio-economic status among communities in Greater Western Sydney, and are linked to income, education, occupation and social class. While there are areas of affluence and aspiring communities in Greater Western Sydney, there remain significant communities, isolated with limited access to services and amenities, described as ‘pockets of desperation’.

The effects of urban sprawl on health and planning are:

- geographically isolated communities with limited access to public transport, reduced access to services, and suffering social isolation, family dysfunction, drug and alcohol problems;
- pockets of disadvantaged communities with high unemployment, high proportion of single person households, and high levels of crime reinforcing social isolation;

- lack of access to education and employment opportunities reinforce social isolation and limit employment options; and
- car dependency with the resulting impact of stress on long travel times and health impacts on air quality.

1.9 Social impacts

Dealing with population growth, demographic changes and pressures for urban expansion are some of the key challenges for Western Sydney over the next 20 years. It is also a challenge that cannot be effectively addressed at a local level and needs cooperation to develop a strong regional response.

Addressing the growth of Western Sydney must be seen in the context of wider structural issues affecting Sydney and the abilities of governments to directly provide for the needs and infrastructure of urban areas. In addition the key outcome that we must be working towards as a region is to ensure the long-term health and liveability of the region.

Effective responses will include redefining the overall frameworks for managing growth that may involve regional and local leaders taking the lead and developing a strong regional direction or vision for dealing with these challenges. This vision would allow for the achievement of interdependent social, economic and environmental sustainability goals.

WSROC's position is that in addressing the growth of major metropolitan areas such as Sydney will require Federal Government re-engagement in urban policy, particularly in relation to housing policy (in cooperation with the NSW Government) and a contributor to the funding of strategic infrastructure (such as rail linkages link to Parramatta to Chatswood project).

The effects of urban sprawl on social issues include:

- pressure on public housing provision and assistance in Western Sydney, as 'affordable housing' becomes an unattainable dream for many;
- lack of support for community renewal strategies including under-serviced localities and their communities, major upgrading and / or reconstruction of social infrastructure facilities to accompanying service improvements;
- lack of housing policies which address broader issues of the affordability of localities and which ensure affordable housing is protected;
- inequitable access to health, social education services for significant areas in the region, often the socially and economically disadvantaged; and
- social isolation and interethnic tension in some areas of the Western Sydney region.

2. The Major Determinants of Urban Settlement Patterns and Desirable Patterns of Development for the Growth of Australian Cities

2.1 Primary determinants of urban settlement patterns

The determinants of urban settlement patterns in Western Sydney are:

Population growth: Within moving population dynamics, future population growth will be primarily occur within the region due to natural increase, and also through a continuing role in accommodating overseas arrivals.

Shifting demographics: The demographics of the region are changing with smaller households, an aging population and culturally diverse communities.

Employment dispersal: An additional 290 000 jobs will need to relocate regionally to meet population growth and continue improvements in employment sufficiency (to 75 per cent).

Regional infrastructure: Costs for infrastructure to support urban efficiency and amenity are high

Non-urban role: Non-urban lands, in particular agricultural industry, form a significant portion of the region. These areas are an integral part of the overall urban fringe of the region.

Second-wave of redevelopment: A second wave of redevelopment is occurring in the eastern areas of the region in the older suburbs. This redevelopment is occurring in existing residential land, on large vacant sites and on former industrial lands.

Metropolitan spatial structure: The traditional spatial structure for planning of the region since 1968 has been viewed as growth corridors of Sydney. This model does not equate with the region having 70% of work and 90% of all trips contained within Greater Western Sydney.

2.2 Desirable patterns of development

Population growth: An indicative target for an additional 260 000 households is forecast for the 2019 planning horizon at this stage (population growth of 510 000 people). The majority of this population growth has already been planned for with only moderate urban extensions required. As far as is possible, population growth should be accommodated in existing areas including supporting infrastructure, employment and services.

Shifting demographics: The patterns of demographic change are uneven and promotion of demographically mixed communities will encourage better use of infrastructure, improved social cohesion, and greater cultural awareness. However, this may require a major shift in housing provision.

Employment dispersal: The changing location of population in the metropolitan area needs to be matched by employment dispersal across all economic sectors, which is not occurring at present. To create quality employment in the future we need to broaden the existing economic structure and match this with improvements in regional skills and education to promote access to new economic sectors.

Regional infrastructure: Costs for infrastructure to support urban efficiency and amenity are high; yet vastly improved linkages between growth, renewal and infrastructure funding is required. The regional infrastructure task is to fill gaps or backlogs while at the same time expanding with and accommodating growth. The regional spatial structure and urban form should support cost-effective and equitable infrastructure provision.

Non-urban role: Accommodating growth (employment and population) until 2019 will only require moderate urban expansion into Greenfield areas. Therefore, long-term certainty for rural Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Ltd 2.doc

and agricultural uses, land for environmental and scenic protection, regional open space and rural lifestyle opportunities should be planned for (in addition to long-term urban certainty).

Second-wave of redevelopment: The management of urban renewal requires surety of quality living and working environments, demographically mixed communities and the utilization and renewal of infrastructure. Focus is needed on managing change in established areas where the majority of residents live and work.

Metropolitan spatial structure: An alternative spatial structure concept is required to guide future growth based on greater intra-regional connection and development of a city-region concept as the Sydney metropolitan area continues to spread and separate. Much of the population movement relating to employment and services **occurs within the region**, not between Western Sydney and Sydney City. Additionally, there should be a mix of affordable housing across the region, access to open space and urban form that encourages physical activity, promotes social amenity and is safe for the community to use².

² An important aspect of sustainable cities is community perception of how safe their living and working environment is. WSROC is not well placed at present to comment on these matters and suggests that this is a useful option for further investigation.

3. A ‘Blueprint’ for Ecologically Sustainable Patterns of Settlement, with Particular Reference to Eco-Efficiency and Equity in the Provision of Services and Infrastructure

3.1 Ecologically Sustainable Development: Eco-efficiency

Eco-efficiency in its broadest form is the practical application of environmentally sustainable development (ESD) principles. Therefore, eco-efficiency must encompass:

- i. the integration of conservation and development (at varying scales, from planning through to application);
- ii. the satisfaction of basic human needs (health, food, opportunities for education and employment, safety);
- iii. the achievement of equity and social justice (no-one is excluded whether by design or accident from basic human needs);
- iv. the provision for social self-determination and cultural diversity; and
- v. the maintenance of ecological integrity.³

The points outlined above build on one another. At a practical level, if an urban development, a strategic policy decision, or a local environmental plan can meet these criteria, then one could say that it is achieving a degree of sustainability.

At a more fundamental level, there is a need to establish a process that drives research, supply, marketing, planning, and lifestyle choices in sustainable direction. This will require benchmarks to measure whether there is an overall move toward or away from sustainability. These benchmarks will need to measure key social, economic and environmental factors. An example would be applying a Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) instead of (or as an extension to) Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Instead of treating the environment separately in State of Environment reports, perhaps we need to investigate the applicability of nationally consistent State of Sustainability (SoS) reports.⁴ The use of something like a SoS Report will more reliably inform all tiers of Government of the long-term impact and effectiveness of policy.

Finally, sustainability operates at many scales from the individual, to local, regional, national and global. A nested set of nationally coordinated sustainability frameworks, each operating at its own scale but applying the principles outlined above may assist with the long-term management of sustainability.

3.2 Ecologically Sustainable Development: Equity in the Provision of Services and Infrastructure

Western Sydney’s longer-term goal is to work in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government to provide an equitable and sustainable urban environment for Greater Western Sydney and the investment needed to construct the physical and social infrastructure required for the region. There is an urgent need for a process that facilitates tri-level government cooperation on urban growth in Greater Western Sydney. Regional Ministries, in particular the Minister for Western Sydney should be maintained and the development a regional budgeting process initiated. All Commonwealth Government policies, programs, plans and initiatives need to have

³ Adapted from Venning & Higgins (2001) *Towards Sustainability*

⁴ At a local to regional level, Newcastle City’s *Indicators of a Sustainable Community* is an excellent example of an attempt to take this kind of approach. See References at end.

a regional focus and develop regional coordination mechanisms specifically involving Local Government.

The longer-term objective of Local Government in the region is security for Local Government in carrying out local planning activities and the development of principles for the allocation of responsibilities between different levels of government. Councils should be resourced carry out local planning, especially when it results from significant urban expansion or redevelopment. Tri-level Government discussions should be commenced to develop broad principles on the allocation of functional responsibilities between levels of government and initiate a detailed and objective audit of the extent of cost shifting by other governments to councils.

Western Sydney requires a balanced regional transport network to provide greater accessibility and connectivity within the region. This requires effective road networks within the region in response to population growth. There is an urgent need for an effective regional public transport network, which connects where people live to where people work, shop or study in the region. The regional transport network should be supported by efficient local transport networks and centres accompanied by a consistent and equitable approach to fares and in particular concession fares. Reduction in health and environmental impacts would result from a balanced regional transport network, particularly in regard to air quality. In a similar vein, increased accessibility to employment and services would result in positive social impacts.

In the long-term Western Sydney requires a more balanced mix of housing styles which can accommodate expected growth in population while making more efficient use of land and transportation resources to create healthy and more sustainable communities. Such an approach sees a greater emphasis on apartment and dual occupancy developments, particularly where these can take advantage of public transport facilities or compatible employment centres. Increased emphasis should be placed on the regeneration of older housing areas, to provide development able to meet the need of current and future residents in a more attractive and efficient manner.

Western Sydney requires a dual evolution of the region's economy to provide a broad range of quality employment, alongside major regional employment growth. From a spatial planning perspective, this will provide for major employment lands expansion in a corridor with excellent transport connections to all areas of the region, concentrate employment growth in existing and some new regional centres and promote the development of strong education and health clusters across the region in association with regional hospitals and universities. At a local level, cities in the region need to identify and develop a diversity of specialities in relation to employment and identity, which will reinforce the range of employment opportunities available in the region.

The rapid growth and the demographic nature of the region requires the provision of education infrastructure that will fully meet the needs of Western Sydney residents and workers. In practical terms this requires an increase in the operational subsidy provided to childcare centres, particularly given the strong regional variation in economic advantage of working parents. There is the need for additional funding and support for students, as well as additional support and incentives for teachers in Western Sydney schools. There is an urgent need for increased support to establish at least one school in each District in Western Sydney that provides a proactive support program for pregnant and parenting students. Education infrastructure should support Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and develop incentives to attract and retain experienced TAFE teachers. Continued funding of the University of Western Sydney will provide a full range of undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities for students in the region.

Western Sydney requires the provision and continued support of cultural infrastructure relevant to the region and which meets the needs of Western Sydney's current and future population. There needs to be adequate support for professional cultural staff and regionally relevant cultural programs which will support Local Government to develop integrated cultural plans. Ideally,

this would operate within a framework of a strategic State Government Cultural Strategy with a priority focus on Western Sydney.

4. Measures to Reduce the Environmental, Social and Economic Costs of Continuing Urban Expansion

4.1 Measures to Reduce the Environmental Costs of Continuing Urban Expansion

- Establish suitable benchmarks to monitor progress towards or away from sustainability.
- Incorporate cost-effective sustainability measures into all aspects of the supply and marketing chain to improve the availability of sustainable goods and services to the community.
- Resource the development and ongoing improvement of balanced regional transport networks to provide greater accessibility and connectivity within regions.
- Integrate planning and management to minimise the risk of incompatible land-use and planning decisions.
- Develop Government and industry frameworks that encourage and support sustainable fuel, energy, water and waste markets.
- Develop a multi-faceted approach that combines planning, regulatory, education, and social programs to facilitate choices (policy, corporate, individual) that have sustainable outcomes.
- Provide security for the supply of open regional space and corridors that will facilitate the long-term maintenance of biodiversity; and a regional framework for its strategic management.

4.2 Measures to Reduce the Social Costs of Continuing Urban Expansion

- Establish suitable benchmarks to monitor progress towards or away from sustainability.
- Employ a more balanced mix of housing styles which will accommodate expected growth in population while making more efficient use of land and transportation resources to create healthy and more sustainable communities.
- Provide equitably distributed and accessible infrastructure, services and the resources to maintain them for the Western Sydney community. By reducing the ‘pockets of desperation’, we can enhance social cohesion.
- Establish infrastructure, services and the resources to maintain them at the same time as new developments, and review existing infrastructure and resources during redevelopments.
- Encourage urban planning that takes actions to minimise risk and maximise health gains for the population.
- Promote the development of strong education and health clusters across the region in association with regional hospitals and universities.
- Provide safe, accessible open space that encourages physical activity.
- Promote regionally relevant cultural programs which will support Local Government to develop integrated cultural plans

4.3 Measures to Reduce the Economic Costs of Continuing Urban Expansion

- Establish suitable benchmarks to monitor progress towards or away from sustainability.
- Provide diverse employment opportunities alongside major regional development and employment growth.

- Provide a diverse mix of housing styles and housing affordability throughout the region.
- Provide employment lands with excellent transport connections to all areas of the region,
- Establish regional centres with a diversity of specialities in relation to employment and identity, which will reinforce the range of employment opportunities available in the region.
- Provide security for the conservation of rural lands and their usefulness for agriculture and horticulture.
- Recognise that Western Sydney is completely integrated with the global city of Sydney in every way – it is not on the margins of the global city as often assumed.

4.4 *Synthesis*

By addressing the points outlined above, we can reduce the costs of urban expansion by:

- i.* integrating conservation and development;
- ii.* satisfying basic human needs;
- iii.* improving equity and social justice;
- iv.* allowing social self-determination and cultural diversity; and
- v.* maintaining ecological integrity.

Most importantly, it is critical for the Federal Government to re-engage with Local Government at a regional level. Because sustainability operates at varying scales, it is only by taking a cooperative approach between all levels of Government that we can achieve effective gains that will benefit the community.

5. Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to Bring About Urban Development Reform and Promote Ecologically Sustainable Patterns of Settlement

Recommendation 1. The Federal Government should develop a role in the funding and provision of sustainable urban infrastructure including (but not restricted to) housing, transport, and open space.

Recommendation 2. The Federal Government should have a significant role in the development of markets for sustainable fuels, energy, water, and waste products and systems. The development of markets will support sustainable urban infrastructure.

Recommendation 3. The Federal Government should develop a role in coordinating and encouraging a process that facilitates choices with sustainable outcomes, whether those choices are individual, planning, industry or corporate in nature. Facilitating choices that have sustainable outcomes will help to support markets for sustainable goods and services.

Recommendation 4. The Federal Government should coordinate the development of nationally consistent benchmarks and indicators for sustainability (social, economic, environmental) that can be applied regionally, yet inform national sustainability processes. Consistent application of sustainability indicators will provide a process for delivering 'sustainability progress reports' and allow refinement and adjustments to be made as necessary.

Recommendation 5. The Federal Government must re-engage with Local Government at a regional level. Because sustainability operates at varying scales, it is only by taking a cooperative approach between all levels of Government that we can achieve effective gains that will benefit the community.

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