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Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Secretary: *Frank Waen*

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13 SEP 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

RE Employment in the Environment Sector

Dear Sir,

Please find attached a joint submission on behalf of the Barton group, and the Environment Institute of Australia. The Barton Group is the CEO alliance responsible for implementing the Commonwealth / Industry Environment Industry Action Agenda; and the Environment Institute of Australia is the advocacy association representing professionals of diverse backgrounds practicing in the environment.

Our submission addresses the basic lack of a contextual understanding of environmental issues in the workplace. There are many channels for acquisition / dissemination of specific technical information to address problems, but there is no broad contextual framework to instruct and inform managers and operators of the environmental significance and impact of actions and decisions taken in the course of normal business.

We believe that a national support program is warranted to raise workplace awareness of the environmental issues relevant to actions performed, where at particular sites, or through policies or specifications embodied in daily tasks or practices.

I would welcome the opportunity to appear as a witness before the inquiry and to present our views and answer questions as needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this submission and I look forward to the findings of this important inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



Paul J Perkins
Chairman

CEO
ACTEW Corporation

Employment in the Environment Industry

A Joint response of Environment Institute of Australia and the Barton Group

The Barton Group

The Barton group is the CEO alliance of environment industry leaders charged with responsibility for implementing the tasks assigned to Industry in the Environment Industry Action Agenda.(EIAA) Details of the Barton group can be found on www.Bartongroup.org , and details of the EIAA can be found at www.industry.gov.au/agendas

The basic premise of the Barton group is support for the view that in business, environmental sustainability is about long-term competitiveness. Sustainability must be integrated into business as a basic competitiveness driver and that business practices and processes be adjusted to support this philosophy.

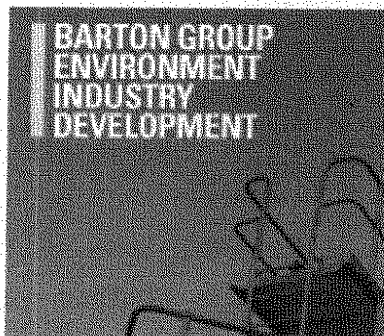
The Barton group is in the first year of implementing the 18 recommended actions of the EIAA.

The Environment Institute of Australia

The Environment Institute of Australia is the professional organisation to represent the views of practitioners and specialists within the broadest sphere of environment. The EIA encompasses professionals from all disciplines including scientists, planners, engineers, educators, architects, lawyers, landscape architects, foresters and many others.

The principal functions of the EIA are to:

- Facilitate interaction amongst environmental professionals
- Promote environmental awareness
- Advance ethical and competent environmental practice.



ENVIRONMENT
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OF AUSTRALIA

Environment Institute and Environment Industry linkages

The companies involved in the Environment Industry are typified by a small number of large water and waste companies, and a very large number of small organisations providing services and skills in environment management and monitoring.

The conventional definition of environment industry is firms providing goods and services related to water, waste and air quality and treatment, and goods and services associated with pollution and its remediation.

This narrow focus on traditional service delivery areas has two shortcomings:

- It excludes emerging and new environmental issue areas (eg. biodiversity, energy efficiency & climate change, coastal ecosystem collapse), and
- It focuses attention on delivery functions rather than policy and specification functions at the

The needs of specific technical environmental education are generally well met by state agencies and by existing institutional arrangements.

What is deficient in the current system is the provision of contextual information to relate the consequences of poor environmental performance through a broad-spectrum range of professions, trades, administrative and service occupations.

It is in this context that the Environment Industry (as represented by the Barton Group) and the Environment Institute of Australia seek to submit a joint submission to the Inquiry on employment in the Environment Industry.

The principal focus of the Barton group is bringing an appropriate level of environmental awareness and training to the many tens of thousands of professional and technical officers who devise and implement corporate and government environmental policy via planning, works specification, contract and procurement specification and administration, by procurement oversight, and similar functions. These officers establish the terms of engagement at 'the front line' of environment management. The Environment Industry is the functional service provider to carry out the specified works and activities.

The issue is that many of the 'front line' workers are unaware of their critical connection with the environment industry and have little if any understanding of the environmental consequences of in appropriate action.

Role of Government

The Barton Group consider that there are three key roles for government in creating opportunities for environment industry employment.

- (a) establishing a cultural mindset for sustainability

The Environment Industry Action Agenda plans for growth in the environment industry to develop a \$40 billion industry by 2010. The Barton Group commend this target as realistic and achievable. However, such growth potential will only be achieved with an informed and supportive workforce, and with the support of

Government via workplace training programs to create a contributory culture and systems that support sustainability in policy development, procurement, contracting and tendering, and in works planning and scheduling.

(b) supporting industry participants to achieve economies of scale

The consultative process established that the environment industry is dominated by a few large participants, and many small participants. A key development path is to foster cooperation and coordination to achieve scale in the industry and equitable balanced growth.

(c) Institutional development & Social research

For the environment industry to grow, it needs an industry program supporting research in social and cultural values as much as technical and scientific studies. There are many environmental science courses and vocational courses to equip technicians but few institutions or programs to support communities, teach and aid consultative processes, or to support communications on these vital areas.

Barton Group : recommended employment development opportunities:

Knowledge of the environment - Promote a culture of understanding the environment consequence of management actions via knowledge technical diffusion program and institutional development in vocational training.

Metrics & Analysis – Foster business analysis that incorporates environmental data into routine business & management planning. Skills and a plan are needed here for the generating the necessary analysis, and identifying the relationships and associations which management can apply as commercial knowledge. (Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting is based on that premise that the supporting analysis be applied in planning and management of government, and firms (corporates and SME's alike). Considerable training and job development is needed to enable TBL reporting to deliver on its potential management benefits.)

Eco-efficiency - Establish a training framework to support eco-efficiency in public procurement. Leadership in procurement is flowing from public sector, but skills need to be developed and made available in agencies to ensure an appropriate and disciplined approach to implementation of eco-efficiency. Such a process can be expected to have a flow-on effect to the private sector.

Clusters - Enable small States, regions and sectors to realise 'economies of scale' via clusters and networks. Regional & industry development officers need relevant training on how and when to use clusters, and large business and SME's needs to be educated as to how to engage in, and with a business and technology cluster.

Stewardship - The principle of stewardship is central to the future of sustainable development. We need to develop institutional arrangements for providing skills and understanding of introducing in applying stewardship in all levels of government , business and in institutions.

Business / Environmental Standards - Where environmental issues are 'pre-market' and considered as public goods, applied research is needed to understand the nature of

the implicit social contracts which underpin these functions, and to assess the social and economic impacts of other standards. Such research is precursor for economic instruments becoming practical and functional management tools. More needs to be done on the role & nature of stretch targets, voluntary agreements and incentive schemes to create vehicles for stewardship arrangements.

The Environment Institute of Australia perspective

“It is the expectation of the Institute that we will witness a massive increase in the demand for formally certified environmental professionals to be employed to prepare environmental management systems, carry out environmental audits and be responsible for the "sign off" of projects having potential environmental impacts. This expectation is sustained by a growing awareness of sensitivity within the community worldwide, demanding assurances that adverse ramifications, such as environmental harm, can and will be avoided. The recent debacles in the accounting profession within the auditing field and the ever growing area of duty-of-care driven litigation with insurance liability consequences, will have the effect that there can be no compromise: employ the right person - competent, knowledgeable, responsible, professional and ethical - or else. This trend to significant increases in employment of environmental professionals is inevitable, if public liability issues are to be reduced to acceptable levels and private confidence (for say, investment purposes) is to be achieved and maintained.

One of the major ramifications of the growing demand for competent environmental professionals, will be the increasing obligation placed on the shoulders of employers (such as Government) to be assured that prospective employees and contract consultants are in fact competent. This in turn places an obligation squarely before the EIA and equivalent professional institutes around the world, to ensure that its members are capable of being accredited, of having their professional competence, professionalism, indeed their adherence to ethical standards, established.