
B Questionnaire

Inquiry into Implementation of Ecologically Sustainable Development by Commonwealth Departments and Agencies

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information from Commonwealth departments and agencies about two key issues:

- how Commonwealth departments and agencies incorporate ESD principles in their decision making, policies, programs, and regulations; and
- how Commonwealth departments and agencies monitor and evaluate their effectiveness in implementing ESD principles in their decision making, policies, programs, and regulations and in promoting ESD outcomes.

Background

The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSES), adopted in 1992, is the Commonwealth's principal policy statement on ESD. The Strategy's core objectives are to:

- enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations;
- provide for equity within and between generations; and
- protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The Strategy contains a number of guiding principles:

- Decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations.
- Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

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- The global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policy should be recognised and considered.
 - The need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised.
 - The need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised.
 - Cost-effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted.
 - Decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect the community.

Amongst other things, the Strategy requires governments to establish appropriate institutional arrangements to ensure the inclusion of ESD principles in policy making processes.

How to respond to this questionnaire

The Commission is seeking information about Commonwealth departments' and agencies' programs that:

- have a *primary* objective of promoting ESD outcomes; and/or
- *could impact significantly* on ESD even though they may not have ESD as their primary focus.

Examples of the first type of program include those relating to resource management, biodiversity protection and site rehabilitation. Examples of the second type of program include those that seek to encourage economic development where that development may have (often unintended) ESD or environmental implications.

For the purposes of this questionnaire, a reference to 'program' should be interpreted broadly as a reference to any, and all of the following: department/agency programs, policies, regulations (including primary legislation), procurement decisions and policies and other decision making processes.

In order to meet the Commission's reporting deadlines for this inquiry, all departments and agencies are urged to provide responses to this questionnaire by **no later than 23 October 1998**.

Departments and agencies may prepare specific replies to each question and/or forward existing publications that contain the information being sought. Examples and suggestions have been provided in *italics* after some questions to provide guidance to respondents on the type of information being sought. These examples

are merely intended to clarify questions and prompt responses but are not exhaustive.

The questionnaire is intended to provide a framework for considering ESD implementation consistently across departments/agencies. The Commission is planning to summarise the responses to the questionnaire and use these as inputs to the inquiry process. Departments and agencies will have an opportunity to provide feedback on responses that have been summarised for use in the inquiry report.

As this questionnaire may not address all issues that respondents wish to raise in relation to the inquiry, all departments and agencies are encouraged to also prepare a submission in response to the Issues Paper.

Queries about this questionnaire should be directed to Barbara Aretino on telephone (03) 9653 2201, fax (03) 9653 2305 or by e-mail baretino@pc.gov.au.

The Commission appreciates your assistance and looks forward to receiving your response.

Questionnaire

For all questions, if responses are already available in a specific publication please provide copies of the relevant pages in the place of compiling a specific reply.

General issues

- a) **What institutional changes has the department/agency made in response to the NSESD to ensure that ESD principles are taken into account in departmental programs and decision making?**

eg.

The department/agency has incorporated ESD principles in its charter and corporate plan and reports ESD outcomes and issues in its annual report.

The department/agency has produced guidelines on how groups, branches and divisions are to incorporate ESD principles in decision making.

The department/agency has established strategies for implementing ESD in specific areas of its activities most likely to impact on ESD.

- b) **How has the department/agency generally accounted for ESD principles in its programs and decision making?**

eg.

i) systematic/structured appraisal of every (or key) initiative(s) to determine whether/how it impacts on ESD. Please describe the process.

ii) systematic/structured appraisal only of initiatives expected to have a significant impact on the environment. Please describe the appraisal process and the threshold which determines whether the process will be applied.

iii) systematic/structured appraisal process is applied to initiatives on an ad hoc basis.

iv) appraisals are conducted on an ad hoc basis and do not need to follow a particular approach.

- c) **Does the department/agency have any discretion in determining ESD priorities across its activities and, if so, how does it do so?**

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- d) **Does the department/agency have resources devoted exclusively to coordinating the implementation of ESD principles in its programs? Please describe.**

eg. A particular branch is responsible for ensuring co-ordinated implementation of ESD principles across the department/agency.

A Identifying key ESD programs

- 1) **List the department/agency's key programs¹ that:**
- a) **have a primary objective of promoting ESD outcomes; and/or**
 - b) **may impact significantly on achievement of ESD even though they may not have ESD or environmental concerns as their primary focus.**

Prioritise these programs according to their importance from an ESD perspective.

For each program, please indicate the associated legislation or relevant agreement that is applicable.

Please include details of programs concerning the department/agency's internal environmental (eg. energy or waste) management.

B Background and objectives of key programs

For each program identified in A, please provide responses to the following questions:

- 2) **Explain the rationale for the program.**
ie. What problem or concern is the program designed to address?
- 3) **Briefly describe the assessment process used by the department/agency to integrate economic, environmental and social considerations in developing the program and associated advice for consideration by government (ex**

¹ Note that 'program' should be interpreted broadly to include any, and all, of the following: department/agency programs, policies, regulations (including primary legislation), procurement decisions and policies and other decision making processes.

ante assessment).

eg:

- a) A cost-benefit analysis (such as a regulation impact statement) that took into account the full range of economic and social costs/benefits and which also included an environmental and social impact assessment specifically intended to account for the full range of environmental and social effects.*
- b) A cost-benefit analysis (such as a regulation impact statement) that took into account the full range of economic, social and environmental costs and benefits but which **did not** explicitly include an environmental or social impact assessment.*
- c) An environmental impact assessment that explicitly took into account the full range of environmental effects, as well as other economic and social consequences as they arose, but **did not** include a formal cost-benefit analysis.*
- d) A departmental or internal program evaluation process (not included in (a) to (c) above) with a focus on ESD that was specifically intended to assess the environmental impacts, costs and benefits. Please describe the process.*
- e) A departmental or internal program evaluation process (not included in (a) to (d) above) that was specifically intended to assess a broad range of economic and social costs and benefits. Please describe the process.*

- 4) (a) Were stakeholders likely to be affected by the program consulted about its ESD implications during the program's development and implementation?**
(b) Which stakeholders were consulted and how?
eg. Direct consultation with key stakeholders through mechanisms such as public hearings and meetings, consultation with representative groups.
- 5) How has the department/agency specifically incorporated some of the ESD principles and objectives, such as the precautionary principle and the need to provide for equity between generations, in this program?**
- 6) (a) Specify the objectives and intended outcomes of the program.**
(b) For programs not primarily concerned with ESD or the environment, are environmental issues incorporated to any extent in the objectives of the program, eg. in secondary or subsidiary objectives?

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- 7) **How does the department/agency (intend to) address any adverse environmental impacts of the program that were identified in the pre-implementation assessment?**

C Operation of key programs

For each program identified in A, please provide responses to the following questions:

- 8) (a) **Briefly summarise how the program operates.**
(b) **For programs that do not have a primary focus on ESD or the environment, only describe how this program impacts on the environment and/or achievement of ESD.**
- 9) **Describe how the department/agency co-ordinates the operation of this program with:**
a) **the operation of ESD or environmental programs administered by other Commonwealth departments/agencies; and**
b) **the operation of ESD and environmental programs administered by state/territory and local governments.**
eg. Memoranda of understanding, consultation on a case by case basis, joint working parties or joint implementation of programs.

D Performance monitoring and reporting

For each program identified in A, please provide responses to the following questions.

- 10) (a) **Is the program's ESD performance assessed against performance indicators, targets or benchmarks?**
(b) **Please specify the indicators or targets.**
(c) **How were these performance indicators developed?**
- 11) **How frequently does the department/agency produce assessment or progress reports on the program's performance in meeting its ESD performance indicators, targets or benchmarks?**

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- 12) (a) Has a more comprehensive evaluation of the program's *overall* success in achieving its ESD objectives been completed?
(b) How frequently are these effectiveness evaluations completed?
(c) Are they conducted by persons who are independent of the program managers?

Please provide details or a copy of an evaluation (if available).

- 13) (a) Does the department/agency report the results of performance monitoring or program evaluations concerning ESD aspects to external interested parties?
(b) Is there a mechanism for interested parties to have input to program evaluations or reviews?
(c) Describe how these mechanisms operate, who participates, and how often they occur.

eg. Evaluation reports released publicly and widely disseminated, regular consultations with interested parties, joint working groups.

E Program Review

For each program identified in A, please provide responses to the following questions:

- 14) How have the results of performance monitoring or program evaluations been used by the department/agency to improve the program's effectiveness in implementing ESD?
- 15) What mechanisms exist to ensure that the results of performance monitoring or program evaluation continue to systematically feed back into decision making and improving the program's effectiveness in implementing ESD?
- 16) Are objectives, performance indicators, benchmarks and targets in relation to the program periodically reviewed to check their continued relevance and modified if necessary? Describe how this operates.

F Impact of programs

For each program identified in A, please provide responses to the following questions:

- 17) What has been the program's impact on promoting ESD outcomes? Please provide evidence.**
eg. How has the program changed community or corporate behaviours in ways which promote ESD outcomes?
- 18) Given the long term nature of achieving ESD or environmental outcomes, how does the department/agency monitor progress *towards* achieving its intended outcomes?**
- 19) For programs with a primary focus on ESD, has the department/agency assessed whether the same outcomes can be achieved more cost effectively? Please provide details.**
- 20) For programs not primarily concerned with ESD, has the need for the department/agency to incorporate ESD principles in the program resulted in a trade-off in terms of the program's effectiveness? Please provide details.**

Other comments

Please provide any other comments that the department/agency wishes to make in relation to implementing ESD principles, either in the programs outlined above or in general.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.