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ESD Inquiry
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins St. East, PO
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Submission No. One

This submission *is* mainly about the concepts concerned with the whole *National Strategy for ESD*.

Julius Kavesci, now deceased, delivered many lectures in philosophy at UWA Extension Service. Attendees seem to remember how often he emphasized the difficulty in keeping the concept clear and separate from the many manifestations or ramifications that tend to obscure it.

The Draft Report is clear on the *Strategy's core objectives*: page 151, copy herewith. But, in the seven *guiding principles* following the *core objectives*, I presume to find fault with the First and Forth. The First refers to effectively integrating long and short term considerations. The *core objectives* are all very long term by comparison. To me, integrate, implies some equality of importance. If the *core objectives*, or basic concepts, are to be adhered to, the long term ecological sustainability must always have preference. The Forth *guiding principle* allows possible devious interpretation. Australia is now one of the more well developed nations. It has the infrastructure and the economy capable of preserving the environment if we will. It is also a most fragile environment and our most pressing NEED is to preserve it. This is not to deny a cost, but reference has been made to that on page 3

The Second and Third of the *guiding principles* are not only compatible with the *core objectives* but very essential to them.

I submit that the Fifth could guide us more safely if it were altered to read, "The desire to maintain and enhance international competitiveness should be recognized in an environmentally sound manner."

The Sixth *guiding principle* is not completely clear to me.

The Seventh *principle* and the Final Statement will form the basis of the rest of my submission.

In the Final Statement, "the *Strategy requires* governments": yet requirements frequently need force to implement them. Only the government may use force: that's how it is and should be. Therefore, the Seventh *guiding principle* takes on momentous importance. Only the "broad community involvement" can insure that the basic concepts are adhered to.

Broad community involvement; is that not every citizen a stakeholder ? This utopian condition is admittedly not achievable but to approach it, some conditions must exist. First among these is that the citizen must have credible ecological information. A current case in point is about one of the few free-flowing rivers continuing in the Murray-Darling basin. Press, TV and Radio are the main source of citizen information and all three inform us of the conflict between some cotton farmers and some nature lovers. Both the livelihood of the cotton farmers and the aesthetic values of the nature lovers are very commendable from the humanist point of view but their *stake* pales into insignificance compared to that of the national citizen *stakeholder*. Because the citizen is incapable of comprehending all of the technicalities of his *stake*, i e :Soil, Vegetation, Water Table, Biodiversity, etc.: is the reason for his need of one or two credible sources of information.

Therefore I submit that it is the business of the commission to insure, enhance and publicize the reliability and credibility of a few organizations such as ABS, CSIRO and possibly a few University Science Depts. Thus the citizen may ascribe the faith and merit he chooses to the pronouncements of other corporate bodies such as OECD, UN, IMF and even other Australian bodies such as DIMA. To become involved in ESD, busy, active, productive Australians need relevant reliable information on the state of the environment. Credibility and frequent ready access are essential. Those Australian citizens do not have the time or the background to evaluate the authors of many conflicting pronouncements or to investigate motives for selective statistics and distortion of projections.

I don't, but think there are some members of The Commission that do, know how to make such an information system happen.

I am obliged to acknowledge that there is no dearth of relevant, reliable information provided by many government organizations.

Environment Western Australia 1998: State of the Environment Report, Dr. Bryan Jenkins, et. al.: See preface, page IV.

This is a splendid work, beautifully presented, well organized, lucid and verifiable. I am told that some other States and the Commonwealth have previously done as well. Yet it is a grievous matter that it doesn't get generally read. I am an older *stakeholder* but have friends in the productive group mentioned above; most with a larger *stake* than I. Yet, in my experience, even if I leave my copy with them and go back several days later, I am disappointed.

They are not apathetic; they just need their information in more frequent, more concise and still credible capsules.

May I take my own advice ? This submission is getting too long and I've only expressed concern for community involvement and it's relation to mass communication.

I have a greater concern: the connection between human numbers and a sustainable environment. I would like to post a second submission next week

Sincerely Jack Griffin

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:

1. Decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations.
2. 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.
3. The global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policy should be recognised and considered.
4. The need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised.
5. The need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised.
6. Cost-effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted.
7. 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.