

MARY MAHER AND ASSOCIATES

Head Office

32 Thomas Street

West End Qld 4101

Tel: 07 3844 9183

Fax: 07 3844 3357

Facsimile Message To Ms Anna Fouloulas

From Mary Maher For the Smart Futures Group

Date 2 December

Subject Call for submissions

Number of Pages 4

Fax Number 03 9653 2305

Dear Anna

Please forgive this late submission. The first opportunity our group had to discuss the issues paper was last Wednesday 25 November. We trust our submission is not too late.

We are a group of 15 Brisbane-based experienced planning practitioners - professors, senior public servants and consultants - who have formed an informal 'Smart Futures' Group to examine integrated planning mechanisms for ESD.

Fundamentally our view is that Australia, following the NSESD (National Strategy for ESD - good process, good product) in 1992, has placed itself on the right track for the 21st Century. However it has moved only 10% of the way and has a great deal yet to do to strengthen its commitment to ESD as its modus operandi.

ESD has become something of a mantra, in danger of remaining rhetoric rather than becoming practice. Our observations are that:

- ESD is not part of the thinking or core decisions in government e.g. GST/tax package debates, uranium mining in World Heritage areas, employment generation.
- Major environmental initiatives for example the Natural Heritage Trust, those of the Australian Greenhouse Office, may come to be seen as Australia carrying out the core part of its commitment to ESD. Yet these initiatives are only one part of the ESD equation. And they are not part of the mainstream budget. They do not add up to any fundamental shift e.g. in our decision about sustainable transport systems, sustainable energy use, sustainable agriculture, air pollution. The NSESD process needed a series of sub-strategies and an ongoing process for systematic change.

- ESD is not a major discrete policy area. Rather it is a fundamental platform on which all decisions are based. ESD has to be incorporated into our criteria for policy setting, planning, funding, and evaluating outcomes. It is a long term commitment and appropriate measures must be set up e.g. Sustainable Seattle project in the USA took 4 years to identify critical indicators, the measures for them and the targets for systematic shift towards greater sustainability. Where is the set of announced aims defining Australia's target for sustainability?

Where is ESD stated as the lead objective for government policy and action?

- The Commonwealth government has led the States in progressive environmentalism through its commitment to International Conventions/Protocols; through the Intergovernmental Agreement etc. Devolution should be handled cautiously to ensure Commonwealth maintains its rightful leading role eg through accreditation processes for State programs in ESD strategies etc.
- The Commonwealth also has a role in evaluation - of State compliance with ESD strategies, of achievement, of impacts predicted and actual. Accountability for State actions needs to be increased and this means increasing emphasis on evaluation and accreditation processes.
- Case studies of planning and implementing ESD are also essential. The Insight program on SBS several weeks ago, in its case study of sea horse protection/marine park conservation in the Pacific highlighted the way that economic, cultural and ecological objectives can be effectively integrated These are the skills of practitioners for the next century.

Essential steps

- Review the scope of the Issues Paper's focus to ensure it is about our economic, ecological and social plans for a sustainable future.
- Reconvene the teams of NSESD #1 and examine incremental changes 1992 - 8. Prepare a 1998 version of the NSESD with case studies of making ESD work, intersectoral solutions.
- Set ESD indicators, measurements and targets for programs, for Departments and for contract performance by senior public servants
- Support work for correct information - ensure State of Environment Reporting is ecological, social and economic in scope.

- Expand the focus from 'existing Commonwealth programs' to existing and potential Commonwealth programs e.g. one initiative needed is the establishment of ESD Auditors Office in the Commonwealth government.