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Subject: Brief Submission to Productivity Commission Report on ESD

I am concerned at the relatively small number of Government Departments that responded to the survey. This implies a lack of interest in, or knowledge of, Sustainable Development. Further, the real value of the report must be questioned as it can not be considered to be comprehensive or representative. If the report is regarded as a definitive statement on the Commonwealth's current actions on ESD, then one can only conclude that progress has been negligible in all but a very small number of departments.

There are a number of departments omitted despite these having a considerable impact on sustainability. In particular the taxation and health departments appear, from the report, to be doing little. The Taxation Department must include ESD principles within the current review of the taxation system. It does not appear to have even rated a mention. An associated issue relating to government purchasing policies which are directed at supporting ESD principles also appears to be overlooked.

Preventative Health Care and Quality of Life issues are fundamental to ESD in our society. These receive little or no attention in the report. Equally there appears to be little acknowledgment by the Social Security Department of ESD principles.

The Industry portfolio should play an important role in ESD. The activities of this Department impact on the environment industry – particularly in the waste and energy technology sectors. Little mention is made except as part of the CRC and Greenhouse Challenge programs. While important, these are not focused on environment industry

development in general. Further, there is very little support by this Department for small and medium sized industries. The very large number of these industries, collectively are able to make a huge impact on the achievement of sustainable development.

Finally, the Government needs to identify the important role of small technology development companies. These are not supported to any significant extent by the CRC program. Also, not many grant or loan programs are really beneficial to small business innovation. Many small technology development companies provide opportunities to develop exportable environment technologies and thus contribute to achievement of sustainability within Australia and Asia. Unfortunately, given the absence of risk capital in Australia, many small technology companies struggle to achieve their potential. This situation, if redressed, could contribute significantly to sustainable development.

In conclusion, I suggest that the Commonwealth Government's current progress towards ESD appears to be very limited. The Commission's report is inadequate as a tool to identify gaps in programs and determine where real progress has been made because of the research's apparent dependence on questionnaires which have received a poor response. The research design therefore requires attention as a first step to completing the report to meet its objectives. Only with comprehensive data and analysis can critical gaps be identified and recommendations made for appropriate action to expedite Australia's progress towards sustainability.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide some comment. I will be pleased to provide additional comment if required.

Thanks you.

Yours sincerely

Prof David Moy
Director