



Hawkesbury City Council

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Sustainability Planning for
Hawkesbury City Council
Final Report

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Institute for
**Sustainable
Futures**



**UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY**

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING FOR HAWKESBURY CITY COUNCIL

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by
Institute for Sustainable Futures

For
Hawkesbury City Council

*Funded by the NSW Environmental Trust
Urban Sustainability Seed Grants*

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**SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING
FOR HAWKESBURY CITY
COUNCIL**

FINAL REPORT

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Final Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Hawkesbury City Council was awarded an Urban Sustainability Seed Funding grant of \$20,000 from the NSW Environmental Trust. Council used these funds to engage ISF to assist with the preparation of a sustainability strategy.

Council has a strategic commitment to 'sustainable and liveable communities' and 'sustainable development' (Draft Strategic Plan 2007/2008, p.26), and is currently undertaking many activities that relate to the various dimensions of sustainability. However, a need was identified to achieve a better integration of sustainability issues across Council.

ISF endorses the need for a strategic approach to integrating and implementing sustainability at the local government level. Such an approach helps to ensure:

- > identification of preferred outcomes and goals
- > high level organisational commitment (and therefore a greater likelihood of achieving the identified outcomes)
- > prioritisation of sustainability initiatives within a strategic framework
- > cost-effectiveness.

The objectives of the project were to:

- > Assess the current situation with regard to sustainability planning – including the identification of any gaps in Council's approach to addressing sustainability,
- > Identify opportunities to integrate sustainability into Council's governance framework and planning processes
- > Embed the community's vision into council's approach to sustainability
- > Increase the understanding of and commitment to sustainability (as a holistic framework with environmental, social and economic dimensions) among Council staff and Councillors
- > Developing a strategic approach to sustainability, to guide and inform Council planning processes over the longer term.

To meet these objectives, ISF worked both independently and in collaboration with Council's City Planning team. Desktop reviews were carried out, both to assess the current situation of Hawkesbury City Council, and to understand the sustainability challenges and opportunities that it faces, and also to collate useful examples of approaches to sustainability in other Councils, and outside the sector. In addition, a series of collaborative workshops was delivered to City Planning staff. These workshops contained a training element, but also provided an opportunity to gather input from staff to assist with the shaping of this report. At the workshops, staff reflected on sustainability challenges and opportunities for the organisation, and used elements of the LGMA Sustainability Health

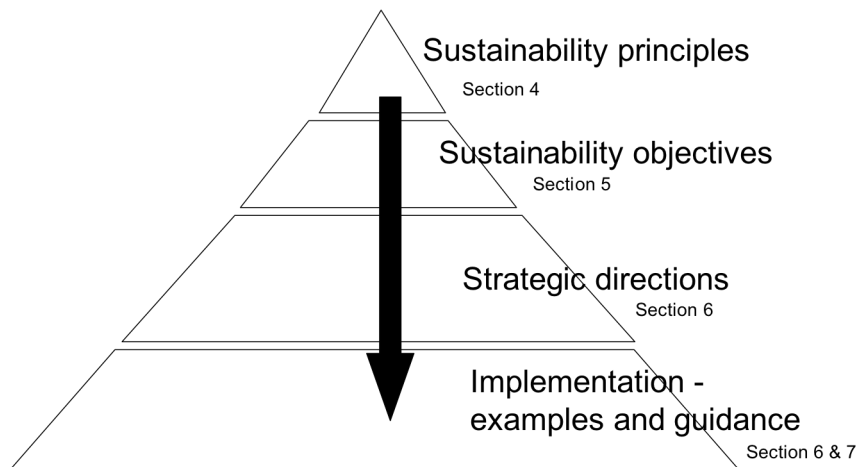
Check¹ to begin an assessment of corporate systems, culture and process as they relate to sustainability.

1.2. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarises the outcomes of the project, and provides a framework for sustainability planning at Council. It is intended as a document that the City Planning team can seek to have endorsed by Council.

(NB: A separate consultant's report has been provided to the City Planning team as a detailed record of the work undertaken by ISF during this project, and that report includes details of the desktop review that was undertaken and the content of the workshops).

Figure 1: Structure and Content of this Report



This report contains:

1. A series of **sustainability principles**. These are based on leading-edge thinking about sustainability, and can be used to guide the high-level strategic approach to sustainability at HCC. They should also function as a 'check' on planning and decision-making – in other words, when considering various options for action it is relevant to assess which option will most effectively implement these principles.
2. A number of **sustainability objectives** for HCC to work towards.
3. Suggested **strategic directions** for HCC. With reference to the sustainability principles and to the particular challenges and opportunities facing HCC, a series of suggested directions is provided, that demonstrate a variety of approaches that Council might take in working towards the sustainability objectives.
4. A range of **implementation examples**. These are specific actions that could be taken under each of the strategic directions. The implementation examples are

¹ The Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) *Sustainability Health Check* is a tool to assist councils in their transition to sustainability. It consists of a manual and a series of worksheets that allow councils to assess and monitor to what extent sustainability principles are understood and used in their social, economic and environmental decision-making. The Health Check aims to raise awareness and educate about sustainability; encourage the analysis and review of council policies, systems and practices; and promote cultural change beyond the 'tick box' and legislative requirements for sustainability.

suggestions only – there are numerous other actions that could be taken in support of a given strategic direction. However the implementation examples included are practical, workable examples, many of which are based on work undertaken elsewhere – both in the local government sector and beyond.

See Figure 1 above for an overview of the structure and content of this report.

This report is not intended to be a strategic plan for Council, that outlines the full range of existing and new actions that should be carried out. Rather it creates a strategic sustainability framework for Council and provides a set of appropriate objectives and suggested directions and implementation examples that would build on what already exists within Council. Once the report is endorsed, actions can be taken within this broad framework, however the precise details of implementation can be discussed internally to ensure that the implementation process is appropriate and realistic.

2. WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

For those of us closely involved in the Sustainable Development Stakes, it's nail-biting stuff - even though this is a race being played out over decades rather than minutes. The stakes could hardly be higher: can we reach that point in our evolutionary history where we start to live sustainably on this Planet before we inflict irreversible damage on the life-support systems that sustain us? Or will we remain hell-bent on testing those systems to destruction (and beyond)?

-Jonathon Porritt, Chair, UK Sustainable Development Commission²

Sustainability as a concept can be defined in a number of ways, and its use in different contexts can sometimes be confusing. However, there is general agreement that as a concept it involves:

- Living within the limits posed by the physical world
- Understanding the interconnections among economy, society, and environment
- Equitable distribution of resources and opportunities³

Probably the most widely cited definition in the field of sustainability is that contained in the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) report, *Our Common Future* (1987), often referred to as 'the Brundtland report'. The report defines sustainable development as: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". There has been much debate about this definition, and indeed the field of sustainability is one in which there is ongoing debate about definitions and terminology, however the UN definition remains a useful starting point. It has also become common practice to refer to sustainability as having various interlinked aspects or dimensions – these are usually cited as environmental, economic, and social. The social dimension is critical – the challenge of sustainability is not just an environmental one, it must also encompass social justice. This requires consideration of questions of (for example) resource distribution, participation in decision-making and equality of access to goods, services and opportunities.

At its core, the concept of sustainability is linked to an assessment that the general way that humans are currently using resources, or 'developing' is *not* sustainable. The assessment is that if humans continue as they are they will cause large scale and possibly irreversible

² The Sustainable Development Commission is the Government's independent watchdog on sustainable development, reporting to the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

³ Maureen Hart <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/>

environmental impacts, with significant negative social consequences. This means that we simply cannot plan to 'carry on as we are':

Business as usual is no longer an option - for government, private sector or individual citizens. Our soils, waters, forests and minerals are not inexhaustible. Farms, industries, homes and lifestyles must become more sustainable, in every community on our planet. To be sustainable, development must improve economic efficiency, protect and restore ecological systems, and enhance the well-being of all peoples.

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

Making a commitment to sustainability entails adopting a framework for planning and decision-making that will challenge and change this 'business as usual' approach, and put in its place a means of achieving a sustainable future.

3. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

"The kind of change required by sustainability implicates each community, each household, each individual. Successful solutions to problems... will need to be rooted in the cultural specificity of the town or region if the people are to be supportive of and involved in such change."

Source: UNESCO - EPD (1997) Educating for a Sustainable Future

Local Government has a responsibility to contribute to a more sustainable future, along with other spheres of government, corporations, community organisations and individual householders. The Rio Declaration (Agenda 21) made in 1992 outlined the responsibilities of governments to ensure sustainable development, and specifically addressed the role of local authorities:

Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development. (1992: 28.1)

In essence a healthy Council that cares for community and environmental assets, is accountable, uses resources wisely, engages its community in decision-making and planning, is resilient and futures-looking, is a sustainable one.

It is important to acknowledge the various 'spheres of interest' that operate for a local Council. Some issues are within a Council's 'control', others are issues that a Council may seek to influence, while still others are issues that a Council will be concerned about (but not necessarily able to influence). All these levels, or spheres are relevant to the development of a strategic approach to sustainability. In the context of these spheres, there are many different ways that Councils can work towards sustainability and many different, planning, cultural and program level changes that Councils can make to protect

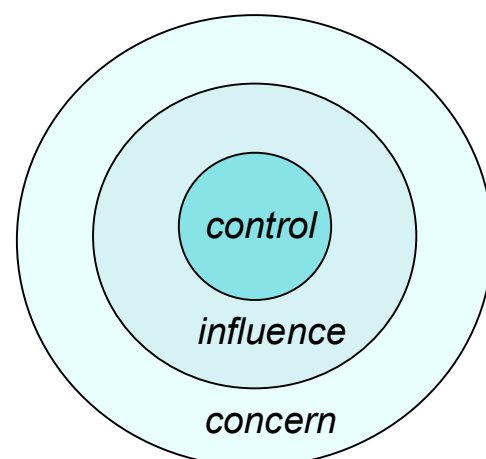


Figure 2: Councils have different relationships to different issues – a holistic approach to sustainability considers all these different 'spheres of interest'.

and add value to economic, social and environmental assets in their communities.

For example, Councils can act as:

- **A leader and custodian**, demonstrating sustainability in action and practice
- **A change agent**, through education, policy, plans and new processes
- **A responsive entity**, responding to community aspirations, needs and concerns⁴

Sustainability planning, in this context, can mean many different things in many different contexts. Sustainability planning for Councils embarking on a formal strategic planning exercise, such as facilitating the process of developing a long-range community plan, can be a highly participative process that runs over several years, and results in a clearly articulated vision, strategic objectives, targets and actions for the whole LGA.

Other Councils may focus on one part of the organisation, or look at reviewing the existing strategic or operational plan from a sustainability perspective. Others may focus on governance issues to embed a sustainability culture in the organisation. Others may focus on reviewing the operational performance of a particular part of the organisation, or a set of instruments such as planning controls, for their sustainability performance.

⁴ LGMA (2006), NSW Local Government Sustainability Health Check.

4. SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

The following principles represent leading sustainability thinking.⁵ They can be used both to guide the high-level strategic approach to sustainability at HCC, and as a useful reference to assist with planning and decision-making.

- Principle 1: The extraction and use of non-renewable resources should be slowed down, and sustainable production and consumption promoted**
- Principle 2: Cyclical rather than linear systems should be adopted, to prevent the accumulation of waste materials**
- Principle 3: The productivity and diversity of nature must be protected and maintained**
- Principle 4: Use of energy and other resources must be just and efficient, both across the globe and between generations**
- Principle 5: Even if there is doubt about the environmental impact that an action will have, one should err on the side of caution to protect the environment**
- Principle 6: Expand and enable cooperative networks to work towards a common, sustainable future**
- Principle 7: Educate and empower people and foster participation**
- Principle 8: Continual improvement will be enabled, based on accountability, transparency and good governance**

Principle 1 - The extraction and use of non-renewable resources must be slowed down and sustainable production and consumption promoted.

This means that fossil fuels, metals, and other minerals must not be extracted at a faster pace than their slow redeposit in the earth's crust. Otherwise quality will be lost due to the inevitable spread of wastes and their accumulation toward often unknown limits beyond which irreversible changes occur. In practical terms this means radically decreasing mining and extraction of fossil fuels (and by association, any practices that rely on these). A range of approaches and tools can be used to promote sustainable production and consumption.

⁵ This set of principles has been developed with reference to various existing and well-known sets of sustainability principles; including the 'system conditions of the 'Natural Step' approach, the 'Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities' developed by the United Nations Environment Program, and the principles contained in the UNCED 'Rio Declaration'. These various principles have been combined and/or adapted for use in this context. On the Natural Step System, see Robert, Karl-Henrik, John Holmberg, and Karl-Erik Eriksson (1994), 'Socio-ecological Principles for a Sustainable Society: Scientific Background and Swedish Experience', Conference paper for meeting of the International Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE), Costa Rica, 1994. Copyright the Natural Step Environmental Institute Ltd. (natstep@2nature.org). See also the Natural Step Australian website: <http://64.207.158.76/au.naturalstep.org/index.html>. On the Melbourne Principles, see: http://www.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/ANZ/WhatWeDo/TBL/Melbourne_Principles.pdf On the Rio Declaration see: Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992) Annex I Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

Particularly valuable strategies include demand management and the use of environmentally sound technologies which can improve environmental performance significantly.

Principle 2 - Cyclical rather than linear systems should be adopted, to prevent the accumulation of waste materials

This means substances must not be produced by society at a faster pace than they can be broken down in nature or deposited into the earth's crust. Otherwise quality will be lost due to the inevitable spread of substances and their accumulation toward often unknown limits beyond which irreversible changes occur. In practical terms this means decreased production of natural substances that are accumulating (non-biodegradable and non-reused), and a phase out of all persistent and unnatural substances.

Principle 3 – The intrinsic value and productivity of biodiversity and natural ecosystems must be recognised, protected and restored

This means the productive systems of nature must not be diminished in quality or quantity, and we must not harvest more from nature than can be re-created. This relates to protection of biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem level. This is critical because our health and prosperity depend on the capacity of nature to reconcentrate and restructure wastes into resources, to provide us with food, fibre, clean water, medicines, and has the right to exist for its own sake. In practical terms this means widespread changes of our use of the surface of the earth in, for instance, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and planning of society.

Principle 4 - Use of resources must be just and efficient, both across the globe and between generations and communities shall be enabled to minimise their ecological footprint

This means that basic human needs must be met with the most resource-efficient methods possible, including a just resource distribution. This is critical because humanity must prosper within the constraints imposed by meeting principles 1-3. Just resource distribution is also necessary in order to achieve social stability and cooperation. In practical terms this means increased global technical and organizational efficiency, including a more resource-economical lifestyle, or a reduced 'ecological footprint' for the richest countries (including Australia). This is also in keeping with the Rio declaration (Principle Number 5⁶) which states that "All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world".

The statement 'across generations' refers to the principle of intergenerational equity – that is, being equitable about how we use resources now and what we leave for those (people, ecosystems) still to come. In practical terms this refers to leaving resources for our children and grandchildren, rather than thinking of only the here and now. The phrase is a reference to the principle of intergenerational equity outlined in the Rio declaration Principle 3: "The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations."

⁶ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992) Annex I Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

Principle 5 – Even if there is doubt about the environmental impact that an action will have, one should err on the side of caution to protect the environment

This is sometimes known as ‘the precautionary principle’.⁷ It means that if an action might cause irreversible harm, but this is not known for certain, then one should take the ‘safest’ or most cautious approach. It is an acknowledgement that when it comes to complex environmental or social systems, in which consequences can be difficult to predict, we often cannot afford to wait for absolute certainty. Instead we must take the most cautious path in order to avoid possible or probable negative consequences of serious magnitude. Another way of understanding the precautionary principle is that if an action may have negative consequences, then the burden of proof lies with the proponents of the action to prove that it will *not* have such an impact.

Principle 6 – Expand and enable cooperative networks to work towards a common, sustainable future.

This principle acknowledges that people are key in the journey towards sustainability. For this reason, cooperative networks are essential, to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, pool resources and support continual environmental improvement. Existing networks can be strengthened and new ones established. People should be well informed, and able to easily access knowledge and share learning, including through such networks.

Principle 7 – Educate and empower people and foster participation.

All people are stakeholders in sustainability – this means that sustainability strategies require broad support. Empowering people mobilises local knowledge and resources and enlists the support and active participation of all who need to be involved in the sustainability journey – from planning to implementation of solutions. It is important to uphold the democratic principle that people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Particular attention needs to be paid to empowering those whose voices are not always heard.

Principle 8 – Enable continual improvement, based on accountability, transparency and good governance.

The journey towards sustainability should be seen as one of continual improvement. To manage the continual improvement cycle, it is necessary to commit to transparent processes, adopt indicators, set targets based on benchmarks, and monitor and report on progress towards these targets. While in some areas gains will be incremental, there are also opportunities to make substantial improvements through innovative strategies, programs and technologies.

⁷ The precautionary principle has been endorsed by the UN and the European Commission, and is reflected in a number of international treaties and declarations.

5. SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

The following strategic objectives have been created with the specific needs of HCC in mind based on council's own documents and the workshops undertaken with council staff. Key challenges for HCC as ISF understands them include limited budgets for consultants or staff training, and the need for practical, readily applicable tools, checklists and materials for the ongoing work of sustainability planning and program development.

The objectives can be seen as a series of high-level goals that Council is working towards.

Objective 1: Council builds and maintains local partnerships for sustainability

Objective 2: Sustainability practices are built into Council's existing operations

Objective 3: Sustainability practices are integrated into Council's existing plans

Objective 4: Council staff and Councillors understand and are committed to sustainability

Objective 5: Council engages and supports people in the community to work towards sustainability

Objective 6: Council secures resources and makes them available to deliver good sustainability outcomes

Objective 7: Sustainability objectives and achievements are communicated

Once Council has made a commitment to these high-level objectives, the organisation can consider the strategic directions and actions that it wishes to embark upon in order to achieve the objectives. These are suggested in the following section, and are described under the main objective that they relate to (although it should be noted that some are cross-cutting in nature and would assist in achieving multiple objectives).

6. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Strategic directions are the approaches that HCC might take in order to achieve sustainability objectives described in the previous section. These are described below. For each direction, implementation examples have also been provided, to provide Council with practical examples of how to take action in support of that strategic direction. Following these explanations, the strategic directions are listed in tabular form, aligned with the sustainability objectives and principles that they are intended to support.

Objective 1: Council builds and maintains local partnerships for sustainability

> Strategic direction 1.1: Work with local businesses to promote corporate social responsibility, and to help businesses become more sustainable.

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Explore corporate sponsorship opportunities.
- Start a voluntary program to encourage local businesses to become more sustainable.

Example 1 - Sustainability Advantage program, run by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change

A program designed to engage businesses in sustainability, and support them to develop a more sustainable business. Councils can support the program by recruiting a 'cluster' of local businesses to register with the program.⁸

Example 2 - Marrickville Council: target sustainability @ marrickville

A voluntary program for businesses and organisations in the Marrickville local government area that recognises achievement of sustainability targets. The sustainability targets areas are carbon emissions from energy use, water imported from outside the catchment and waste to landfill. Achievement of targets is verified by Council. All businesses that have made commitments and registered their baseline values are included in a *target sustainability @ marrickville* Business Directory. Council uses its own website and the local media to inform the community of the Directory and to encourage sustainable purchasing decisions. Achievements within the program are also recognised at Council's annual Environment Awards.⁹

> Strategic direction 1.2: Increase Council-community partnerships for sustainability

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Explore social venture capital opportunities
- Explore opportunities for grant-funded community programs (eg Sustainability Street, Earthworks, schools programs)

> Strategic direction 1.3: Support Council staff to work with the community on sustainability

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Enable council staff to attend community functions and work with community groups after hours, in a paid capacity.

Objective 2: Sustainability practices are built into Council's existing operations

> Strategic direction 2.1: Practice efficient resource use

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Energy savings plan (existing)
- Water savings plan (existing)

> Strategic direction 2.2: Practice sustainable procurement

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Develop a sustainable procurement policy to guide purchasing decisions across Council (see Strategic direction 3.2).

⁸ More information: <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainbus/sustainabilityadvantage.htm>

⁹ More information: <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/environment/businesses/target.htm>

> **Strategic direction 2.3: Demonstrate Council's practical commitment to sustainability in ways that are visible to the community.**

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Identify high-profile demonstration sites, among existing and planned projects, that can be used to showcase sustainable materials or technology. For example, Council could use sustainable materials like recycled rubber matting when installing or upgrading a playground, or install water and energy savings devices, or solar hot water systems in community buildings or Council run facilities. These kinds of actions could be promoted to the community – for example with interpretive signage to explain the features, or via Council communications and the local media. This kind of approach would have both a community education function, and help to promote Council as a sustainability leader.

Objective 3: Sustainability practices are integrated into Council's existing plans and policies

Strategic direction 3.1: Consider sustainability in decision-making

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Build sustainability into the Asset Management Plan
- Use of sustainability checklists for decision making
- Use of 'multi-criteria analysis' where scores are given for each proposed action against a number of key sustainability criteria
- Requiring some key sustainability criteria to be addressed in reports to Council – asking people to write a few lines on social, economic and environmental impacts and risks and how these are being reduced or addressed

Example: Critically assess decisions across a range of key sustainability criteria

Several effective checklists have been developed to help Councils consider the 'triple bottom line' (TBL) in decision-making; that is the social, environmental and economic impacts of the decision. One way that TBL thinking can be reinforced is to require each Ordinary report to Council to include information about the impact that the proposed policy / plan/ program/ decision will have on social/cultural, environmental, economic performance of the organisation and health of the LGA.

Another way for such checklists to be used is to assess proposed plans by the plan makers. This is in line with the internationally popular approach of Strategic Environmental Assessment – checking at a strategic level whether plans may have an unintended environmental or social impact, and through good design (in combination with mitigation in some instances), working to reduce these impacts.

Simplified checklists could also be used for the budgeting process, perhaps linking the checklist to the details of the Strategic Objectives in the Strategic Plan. There are a range of existing checklists available¹⁰ that could be modified and used by HCC.

Strategic direction 3.2: Build sustainable procurement principles into Council purchasing policies and guidelines

Procurement is a very important area for concentration on sustainability – individual purchases are often made without investigation into the social or environmental impacts of

¹⁰ An International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) checklist is downloadable at: <http://www6.iclei.org/mp/index.html>

those purchasing decisions. Making a strategic commitment to ethical consumption decisions and providing a framework for staff to know what is preferred, will help achieve sustainable outcomes.

Practical and ad-hoc opportunities to make more sustainable purchasing decisions should be pursued wherever possible in Council operations, but the ideal approach is to develop a comprehensive sustainable procurement policy and guidelines that can guide purchasing decisions across Council.

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- As uniform procurement and tender processes are established across Council, ensure that sustainability features are embedded within these policies. There are several ways that sustainable procurement guidelines or policies can be created, for example, they may include checklists, questionnaires for suppliers, and preferred materials lists.
- Review infrastructure and facilities maintenance projects to identify opportunities to make more sustainable purchasing decisions. For example, using water and energy savings devices in Council buildings, implementing the Septic Safe program, using non-toxic paints and other sustainable building products.
- Review Council's office procurement to identify opportunities for making more sustainable purchasing decisions – such as recycled paper and stationery items, recycling toner cartridges etc (see Strategic direction Examples of more environmentally friendly products include:
 - Products with recycled content (Labels, Post-it Pads, Facial & Toilet Tissue, Copy Paper, Hand Towel, Refillable Whiteboard Markers, Cartridges etc.)
 - Energy efficient products with low air emissions (see star ratings)
 - Water efficient products (Dual flush toilets, shower heads, tap fittings, flow regulators, drought resistant indigenous plants, timers, water tanks, rain sensors etc)
 - Non/low toxic products (paints, varnishes, floor coverings, cleaning products)
 - Reused products (recycled timber, refurbished office furniture)

There are several good resources about sustainable purchasing, including the NSW Government 'Green Goods' website,¹¹ and the ICLEI sustainable procurement program, which offers templates and support for Councils embarking on this process¹².

Strategic direction 3.3: Support operational staff with guidance on sustainability in their work areas

It is often the case that Council operational staff are very busy responding to issues as they arise, and find it difficult to research options in the course of their work. Providing some strategic guidance to operational work might assist in creating more sustainable outcomes. For example, guidance on stormwater responses which incorporate landscape value and use water sensitive urban design, or whole water cycle management principles, with design and technical information could assist.

Another option would be to involve operational staff in a review of their own areas of operation – using, a mix of training and self-directed review. The recently released

¹¹ <http://www.greengoods.nsw.gov.au/rsc/link.htm>

¹² <http://www.aela.org.au/greenprocurement/Publications/Chapter%203%202004%20-%20SGPA.pdf>

Sustainability Health Check could be a useful tool to use for these purposes, as it gives a clear framework for assessing sustainability 'health' and has practical worksheets that can be used by groups of staff together.

Objective 4: Council staff and Councillors understand and are committed to sustainability, and are supported in working towards it

> Strategic direction 4.1: Inform Councillors about Council's approach to sustainability issues

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Briefing sessions for new incoming Councillors, to inform them about Council's approach to sustainability, current Council actions, objectives and opportunities

> Strategic direction 4.2: Recognise staff achievement on sustainability

Examples of how this might be implemented:

'In-house sustainability showcase' – a day, or half-day, where staff gather to share their learning, actions and achievements on sustainability. Each section of Council could make a presentation to explain to other sections how they are addressing sustainability issues.

This would increase understanding that sustainability is a whole-of-Council issue, with social, environmental and economic dimensions. Could also include a discussion session to explore opportunities for collaboration for sustainability across teams.

> Strategic direction 4.3: Increase internal cooperation and communication by building the capacity of Council staff to work together on sustainability issues

Examples of how this might be implemented:

Sustainability working group (existing). Role of this group could be reviewed to maximise its benefit to the organisation. Review could ensure that it includes representation from all sections of council, has a clear mandate for action, a clear agenda and meeting processes, and agreed reporting arrangements (eg. to ManEx)

> Strategic direction 4.4: Increase commitment of Council staff to sustainability as a core value of HCC

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Incorporate sustainability criteria in recruitment documents, especially for senior staff
- Incorporate sustainability content in staff induction materials/process. Set out the sustainability principles and practices that Council expects its staff to adhere to

> Strategic direction 4.5: Increase sustainability capacity of staff

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Develop and implement staff training program on principles and practices of sustainability, increase in-house training and link this directly to day-to-day work. The aim should be to change the perception of organisational learning and training and promote the benefits to staff. This could build on the training that is already

outlined in the Strategic Planning team's operational plan (eg existing training on salinity, soil management, water management etc).

- Encourage staff attendance at specific technical events such as Engineering field days to learn about new technologies, such as waste water treatment, so that Council staff can be a source of up-to-date knowledge for the community, and be in a position to suggest more sustainable technologies for residential developments
- Provide mechanisms for staff to share their expertise through peer learning – this can include relatively informal learning opportunities – field visits guided by staff to explain new technologies and approaches or demonstrate problems, morning tea and project update, etc.

Example - Showcasing sustainable infrastructure design and procurement for HCC staff

This is an important area for all Councils. Hawkesbury City council is planning to make significant investment in infrastructure over the next 10 years – maintaining and replacing ageing infrastructure to ensure standards of community facilities are maintained into the future.

If, for example, \$1.29 million extra is invested in infrastructure during 2007/08 (as currently proposed), including on roads, timber bridge replacement, and drainage works, this is an opportunity to make sure that sustainability principles are used in the selection of materials and processes, reuse of materials, design and so on. There are numerous ways that such an approach can be used to both minimise the impacts of this work and maximise the benefits.

This might be an opportune time to increase staff exposure to new technologies and processes and perhaps to learn from other Councils that have recently used new materials, or designs in infrastructure. Working with a few champions within this section of Council to organise, for example, an infrastructure expo, with stalls, guest speakers, presentations and Q&A sessions could be an effective way to give a wide range of staff exposure to new materials and new ways of approaching infrastructure.

Objective 5: Council engages and supports people in the community to work towards sustainability

> Strategic direction 5.1: Educate and engage the community about sustainability issues

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Develop schools-based programs to engage young people in sustainability issues

Example 1 – Engaging Eurobodalla schools

Eurobodalla Shire Council has won LGSA awards for its initiative program that engages local schools in Environmental Education. Over a nine year program, all Eurobodalla Schools were proactively engaged on sustainability and conservation issues. A key strategy in developing and implementing successful programs was the employment of an Environmental Education Officer who provided a single contact point for schools and the community in developing and delivering environmental education for the school curricula.

Example 2 – RiverLife program

The Marrickville Council and Canterbury City Council *RiverLife Interpretive Tour Program* trained community volunteers to become key 'multipliers' for stormwater education by developing and delivering interpretive environmental tours along the Cooks River in Sydney's inner west. Initially established with a Stormwater Trust

grant, the program has been extremely successful – to date, 55 volunteer tour guides have been trained, and over 65 tours have been delivered, to over 600 members of the public. The program is unique in that it engages the community as partners in dealing with the complexities of sustainability. It builds the capacity of the community to learn about their local environment and to actively participate in the future of both the program and the sustainability of the catchment environment.

> **Strategic direction 5.2: Recognise and support sustainability champions in the community**

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- The existing 'Citizen of the Month'¹³ program could choose environmentally active citizens, eco-architects, teachers initiating innovative environmental education in their schools, people doing environmental volunteer work etc.
- Council could create annual environmental innovation awards, to recognise individuals, schools, workplaces and entrepreneurial efforts towards reducing environmental impacts or caring for the local area. See for example
- Use of community expertise in program development – sustainability steering groups, working groups, existing advisory committees
- Create a community grants program to support community sustainability initiatives.

Example: a community grants program to support community sustainability initiatives

Marrickville Council's 'Citizens for Sustainability' Grant program, allocates funding to support community-based sustainability projects in the LGA.¹⁴ The aims of the program are to:

- Provide opportunities for citizens to contribute towards sustainable initiatives in the Local Government Area (LGA)
- Support citizens who are interested in contributing to sustainability within the Marrickville LGA; and
- Collaborate with citizens who are required to define their project objectives, consistent with LA21, develop an action plan, deliver agreed outcomes and provide an acquittal report upon completion.

The Council believes that 'supporting community-based and initiated action for sustainability empowers the community and facilitates long-term commitment and participation in sustainability'.

Strategic direction 5.3: Enhance public participation in Council decision-making

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Use the recently adopted HCC Community Engagement Strategy (July 2007) to guide the engagement of the community on sustainability issues
- Use existing public forums, eg. Committees, public markets, and other public events as opportunities to engage the community
- Consider a range of formats, eg. a series of small workshops, a youth forum, visioning workshops, world café, citizens jury, guest speakers, public debates¹⁵

¹³ <http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/news/pages/25964.html>

¹⁴ More information:

<http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/environment/ecology/citizensforsustainabilitygrant.htm>

¹⁵

Example: Engaging the community on the development of a Community Plan, within a sustainability framework

It would be possible to use sustainability as a framework for the up and coming community plan development process that may happen as a result of the Department of Local Government planning and reporting reform. Hornsby Council, for example, is looking at using futures perspectives to develop scenario papers for key sustainability issues for the LGA, to be used in their community engagement process. This means that the consultation and engagement process will support the local community with up to date information about key issues, to prompt debate and informing decision-making. Blue Mountains City Council created similar material, undertook widespread and innovative community engagement for the creation of the 25-year Vision and Map for Action.¹⁶

Objective 6: Council secures additional resources for council to make available for delivering good sustainability outcomes**Strategic direction 6.1: Seek ways to diversify sources of income and other resources**

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Explore the possibility of business sponsorship or partnership opportunities
- Continue to seek out grant opportunities

Example: LGSA grants

The NSW Local Government and Shires Association maintains a webpage on grants available to councils on sustainability issues from a range of sources, including federal and state government. This can be accessed at <http://www.lgsa.org.au/www/html/254-funding-opportunities--grants.asp>

Objective 7: Council communicates its commitment to sustainability and its progress towards its sustainability objectives to the community**Strategic direction 7.1: Make information on progress towards sustainability objectives available to the public using a range of communication tools**

Examples of how this might be implemented:

- Incorporate sustainability reporting into Council's Annual Report
- Make Council's sustainability objectives available on the website, with up-to-date information about progress towards them
- Use local media and/or Council publications to communicate positive stories about Council innovation and best practice

The following table shows the strategic directions described above, aligned with the sustainability objectives and principles that they are intended to support.

¹⁶ More information <http://www.sustainablebluemountains.net.au/>

Sustainability Principles	Sustainability Objectives	Strategic Directions
<p><i>The extraction and use of non-renewable resources should be slowed down</i></p> <p><i>Cyclical rather than linear systems should be adopted, to prevent the accumulation of waste materials</i></p> <p><i>The productivity and diversity of nature must be protected and maintained</i></p> <p><i>Use of energy and other resources must be just and efficient, both across the globe and between generations</i></p> <p><i>Even if there is doubt about the environmental impact that an action will have, one should err on the side of caution to protect the environment</i></p> <p><i>Expand and enable cooperative networks towards a common, sustainable future</i></p> <p><i>Empower people and foster participation</i></p> <p><i>Continual improvement will be enabled, based on accountability, transparency and good governance</i></p>	<p>Objective 1: Council builds and maintains local partnerships for sustainability</p>	<p>1.1 Work with local businesses to promote corporate social responsibility, and to help businesses become more sustainable.</p> <p>1.2 Increase Council-community partnerships for sustainability</p> <p>1.3 Support Council staff to work with the community on sustainability</p>
	<p>Objective 2: Sustainability practices are built into Council's existing operations</p>	<p>2.1: Practice efficient resource use</p> <p>2.2: Practice sustainable procurement</p> <p>2.3: Demonstrate Council's practical commitment to sustainability in ways that are visible to the community.</p>
	<p>Objective 3: Sustainability practices are integrated into Council's existing plans and policies</p>	<p>3.1: Consider sustainability in decision-making</p> <p>3.2 Build sustainable procurement principles into Council purchasing policies and guidelines</p> <p>3.3: Support operational staff with guidance on sustainability in their work areas</p>
	<p>Objective 4: Council staff and Councillors understand and are committed to sustainability and are supported in working towards it</p>	<p>4.1 Inform Councillors about Council's approach to sustainability issues</p> <p>4.2 Recognise staff achievement on sustainability</p> <p>4.3 Increase internal cooperation and communication by building the capacity of Council staff to work together on sustainability issues</p> <p>4.4 Increase commitment of Council staff to sustainability as a core value of HCC</p> <p>4.5 Increase sustainability capacity of staff</p>
	<p>Objective 5: Council engages and supports people in the community to work towards sustainability</p>	<p>5.1: Educate and engage the community about sustainability issues</p> <p>5.2: Recognise and support sustainability champions in the community</p> <p>5.3: Enhance public participation in Council decision-making</p>
	<p>Objective 6: Council secures resources and makes them available to deliver good sustainability outcomes</p>	<p>6.1: Seek ways to diversify sources of income and other resources</p>
	<p>Objective 7: Council communicates its commitment to sustainability and its progress towards its sustainability objectives to the community</p>	<p>7.1: Make information on progress towards sustainability objectives available to the public using a range of communication tools</p>

7. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPLEMENTATION

Take an integrated systems approach or an overall holistic approach to considering all stakeholders and the effect on the environment when attempting to solve problems. Rather than focusing solely on the technology aspects, and solving one problem at the expense of another, aim for a co-ordinated overall solution... Approaches that are multi-faceted and synergistic are preferable to single issue approaches.

(IPENZ, Sustainability Report, 2006)

7.1.1. How do we want to work?

As well as working towards the sustainability objectives themselves, Council may also want to commit to some principles about how it will approach working for change within the organization. These might include:

- Helping build knowledge and capacity about sustainability in the organisation
- Being respectful of other people's existing commitments and respecting sustainable, healthy working practices
- Working in collaboration and partnership
- Providing opportunity for professional development, career progression
- Creating changes that are sustained over time – trying to embed change
- Supporting ourselves – celebrating the wins, being realistic, being adaptive

7.1.2. Embedding change

In local government, ensuring that sustainability strategies and long term action is embedded means ensuring that it is recognised in the key plans, and in particular in the Management Plan which is the basis on which resources, including finances, are allocated. For Planning staff, this implies thinking about planning cycles for the important documents and identifying the crucial points for making sure that strategies are adopted and action plans committed to.

More broadly within the Council, getting the strategies and action plans into the minds of staff and onto their agendas can be achieved by establishing interdepartmental project teams, or 'issue' teams for set periods of time. Recruiting internal champions for the issue at different levels of the organisation, including management and operational staff is also important. Any new programs or changes to existing programs or ways of working can be linked to training opportunities or career development opportunities for staff, as this may help to generate more enthusiasm as well as understanding.

In terms of the Council's public face and formal commitments, strategies are achieved through formal resolutions of Council and can be reaffirmed through public gestures of political commitment to the program – such as launches, Mayoral involvement, annual awards and media releases. Once the strategies have been developed and/or endorsed through public participation, it is crucial to continue informing the community of progress. This requires regular reporting back on the progress of change, and can be achieved through newsletters, annual reports, 'scorecards', Council website etc.

7.1.3. Being idealistic and pragmatic

Change requires energy to initiate and maintain. It is easy to underestimate the patience, resolve and effort required to see a change through from idea to implementation to maintenance. Being realistic about what you can achieve, what support you need, and the waxing and waning of your own capacity at various times may help you select which internal change projects you will work on first, or later, and in which combinations.

7.1.4. Making decisions about priority actions

When making decisions about the kinds of implementation actions to take, or which of the examples suggested in this report to adopt, a clear set of decision-making criteria should be used. The following is a list of suggested considerations:

Socio-cultural

- Social – Will this activity provide benefits to the community of Hawkesbury? Does it address a community priority?
- Individual - Is there a staff member willing to take the lead on advancing this action, and are there people available to support them? Will it provide them with useful professional skills and experience?
- Organisational - Will this activity contribute positively to the overall work experience of staff across the organisation – or at least not have a negative impact?

Ecological

- Will this activity contribute positively, or at least do no harm, to the natural assets of Hawkesbury?
- Will this activity increase consideration of the ecological impacts of Council's activities, and encourage people to avoid them?
- Will this activity help Council reduce resource use and increase efficiency?

Economic

- Can this activity be done within existing budgets? If not, can a 'highly likely' funding source be identified?
- Will this activity require any ongoing inputs of funds? Have the long term financial implications of this activity been considered and planned for?

Governance

- Will this activity have any other benefit to Council?
- Can it be done through existing avenues or in response to existing stated needs ('two birds with one stone')?
- Will this action increase Council's reputation and standing in the local community?

8. REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

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Boyle, C., Te Kapa Coates, G., Macbeth, A., Shearer, I. and Wakim, n. (2006) Sustainability and engineering in New Zealand practical guidelines for engineers. Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand. Available in full at http://www.ipenz.org.nz/ipenz/media_comm/documents/SustainabilityDoc_000.pdf

Note: This document contains some excellent, simple checklists for sustainable approaches to engineering and technology, design of technologies and products, buildings, energy, transportation, water and solid waste (pp 29-35). Pages 5-15 contain a concise and up to date summary of the concepts, principles and practices of sustainability as they directly relate to engineering. This document could be used for training, or as a starting point for developing checklists for internal use.

Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, 'Learning for Sustainability – what it means for local government', *NSW Environmental Education Plan 2007 – 2010*. Available at: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/2006535_lfs200710_localgov.pdf

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<http://www.greenleaf-publishing.com/content/pdfs/systhink.pdf>

This is a 7 page article which looks at the management and structural issues related to sustainability in organisations. It could be useful to explain the rationale behind governance or organisational systems change for sustainability. Bob Doppelt also co-authored the book 'Leading change toward sustainability – a Change Management Guide for Business, Government and Civil Society', Greenleaf Publishing, 2003.

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