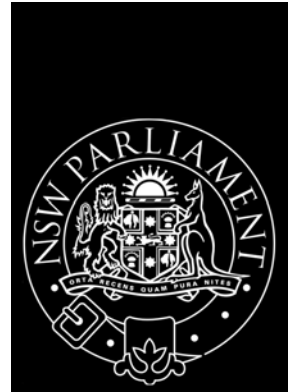


LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



# Standing Committee on Public Works

## 2006 CONFERENCE REPORT

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The National Parliamentary Public Works and Environment  
Committees Conference, Brisbane and Cairns

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## Functions of the Committee

The Standing Committee on Public Works was originally established in New South Wales in 1887. Its operations were suspended in 1930.

It was re-established by Motion of the Legislative Assembly on 25 May 1995 on the following basis :

That a Standing Committee on Public Works be appointed to inquire into and report from time to time, with the following Terms of Reference:

As an ongoing task the Committee is to examine and report on such existing and proposed capital works projects or matters relating to capital works projects in the public sector, including the environmental impact of such works, and whether alternative management practices offer lower incremental costs, as are referred to it by:

- the Minister for Public Works and Services
- any Minister or by resolution of the Legislative Assembly, or
- by motion of the Committee.

The Terms of Reference were renewed on 3 June 1999 by the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament.

The Committee comprises seven members of the Legislative Assembly:

- Mr Kevin Greene MP, Chair
- Ms Marie Andrews MP, Vice Chair
- Ms Angela D'Amore MP
- Mr Peter Draper MP
- Mrs Karyn Paluzzano MP
- Mr Steven Pringle MP
- Mr Ian Slack-Smith MP

The Hon Paul Whelan, Minister for Police and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Assembly, expanded on the role envisaged for the Committee by the Parliament in a speech to the House on 25 May 1995:

The Committee may inquire into the capital works plans of State-owned corporations and joint ventures with the private sector. The Committee will seek to find savings in capital works programs whilst achieving a net reduction in environmental impacts by public sector developers.

The Committee's work is expected to provide incentives to the public sector to produce more robust cost-benefit analyses within the government budgetary process and to give more emphasis to least-cost planning approaches.

The Committee will be sufficiently resourced to enable it to conduct parallel inquiries into specific projects and capital works programs generally.... it will have sufficient resources to inquire into the capital works program of all government agencies whose capital works programs affect the coastal, environmental and transport sectors.

The Standing Committee on Public Works absorbed the functions of the Standing Committee on the Environmental Impact of Capital Works, which had been established by the 50<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

Functions of the Committee

In the Fifty-First Parliament, the Committee examined health, education, the 2000 Olympics, waterways and transport infrastructure as well as urban and environmental planning issues. It also investigated the development and approval processes for capital works procurement across the public sector.

In the 52<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, the Committee tabled eleven reports:

- Report on Capital Works Procurement (Report No 52/1)
- The National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees 1999, Hobart, Tasmania (Report No. 52/2)
- Inquiry into Infrastructure Delivery and Maintenance: Volume One - Report on Office Accommodation Management (Report No. 52/3)
- The National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees 2000, Darwin, Northern Territory (Report No. 52/4)
- Follow –Up Inquiry Into the Lake Illawarra Authority Report & NSW School Facilities Report (Report No. 52/5)
- Inquiry into Infrastructure Delivery & Maintenance: Volume Two - Land Fleet Management (Report No. 52/6)
- Inquiry Into Sick Building Syndrome (Report No. 52/7)
- Inquiry into Government Energy Reduction Targets (Report No. 52/8)
- Inquiry into Infrastructure Delivery and Maintenance: Volume Three - Building Maintenance Management (Report No. 52/9)
- The National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees 2002, Adelaide, South Australia (Report No. 52/10)
- Inquiry into Urban Water Infrastructure (Interim Report No.52/11)

In the 53<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, the Committee tabled eight reports:

- The National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees 2003, Perth, Western Australia (Report No. 53/01)
- Inquiry into Energy Consumption in Residential Buildings (Report No. 53/02)
- The National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees 2004, Melbourne and Lorne, Victoria (Report No.53/03)
- Inquiry into the Joint Use and Co-location of Public Buildings (Report No. 53/04)
- Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas (Report No. 53/05)
- Inquiry into Municipal Waste Management in NSW (Report No. 53/06)
- 2005 Conference Report: The National Parliamentary Works and Environment Committee Conference Canberra and the International Town Centres and Communities Conference, Yeppoon (Report No. 53/07)
- Sportsground Management in NSW (Report No. 53/08)



## Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Parliamentary Environment and Public Works Committees was held in Brisbane and Cairns over five days from 24 to 28 July 2006. Delegates from relevant parliamentary committees of the Commonwealth, State and Territory parliaments and the New Zealand Parliament attended the conference, presenting a key opportunity for members of the NSW Public Works Committee to meet with members of similar committees in other jurisdictions. Conference attendance facilitates the discussion of issues and exchange of ideas.

1.2 The aims of the Conference are to:<sup>1</sup>

- discuss and be informed on matters related to environmental and resource management and public works, to further the knowledge and understanding of these issues by parliamentary committee members and to thereby enhance their effectiveness as parliamentarians in general and committee members in particular;
- foster inter-jurisdictional understanding and cooperation; and
- provide a forum for committee members from different jurisdictions to periodically consider the purpose and role of committees and ways to facilitate and enhance the work that they do.

1.3 Ms Angela D'Amore MP (from 25 July) and Mr Ian Slack-Smith MP represented the NSW Public Works Committee at the Conference. Ms Carolynne James, Committee Manager, also attended.

1.4 The remainder of this report provides a summary of the presentations and field trips that constituted the Conference.

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<sup>1</sup> Queensland Public Works Committee, *Report on the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees, Queensland, 24-27 July 2006*, p 1.

## Chapter Two – National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees Conference

2.1 The focus of the 11th National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees Conference was ecotourism and developing infrastructure in environmentally sensitive areas. Conference delegates heard from a variety of speakers including government officials, academics and representatives of the tourism industry.

### Day One – Monday 24 July 2006

2.2 The first session in the Premier's Hall at Parliament House, Brisbane, started with a presentation by David Morgans, Director of Destination Queensland, Tourism Queensland, on the Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003-2008.

2.3 Mr Morgans identified the following as key elements of ecotourism:

- It must be ecologically, economically, socially and culturally sustainable.
- It depends on the natural environment.
- It involves education and interpretation, for example, helping people to see the story behind the trees and the reef.
- It makes a contribution to conservation.
- It sustains local communities.
- It involves fun and enjoyment.

2.4 Sustainable tourism was described as being about the principles of economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability. It is the desired direction for the industry as a whole whereas ecotourism is a subset of the wider tourism industry.

2.5 Mr Morgans also outlined the Queensland Ecotourism Plan, the Tourism in Protected Areas Initiative and the potential for Indigenous involvement in tourism through the development of ecotourism in the Cape York and Torres Strait regions.

2.6 An inspection of Couran Cove followed where Mayor Ron Clarke of the Gold Coast City Council discussed ecotourism and the Couran Cove Resort project.

2.7 Delegates then travelled to Lamington National Park for session two where Luke Christensen of Binna Burra Mountain Lodge provided information on Binna Burra Mountain Lodge which has been an eco-tourism lodge for 73 years. The core principle of the Lodge is to educate guests about the ecology and history of the Lamington National Park. Mr Christensen also outlined the ways in which the Lodge seeks to protect biodiversity and operate with minimal environmental impact through: the reduction of solid waste; control of the way in which water is consumed; operation of a sewage treatment plant; ensuring energy efficiency; and by land management practices. An inspection of Binna Burra Mountain Lodge followed the presentation.

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## Day Two – Tuesday 25 July 2006

- 2.8 Ralph Henderson, Director of Tourism and Visitor Management, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, opened the third session with a talk on managing tourism in Queensland parks. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service manages about 7% of Queensland; there are 244 national parks (seven million hectares) and 800 other areas, totalling approximately 12 million hectares. There are five World Heritage areas in Queensland. Mr Henderson discussed, amongst other things, the development of a process for determining sustainable visitor capacity, the introduction of rolling renewal of authorities for tourism industry operators, and the conduct of five-yearly reviews of sustainability and fees.
- 2.9 This was followed by a presentation on the Great Walks of Queensland project, also by Ralph Henderson. The Great Walks of Queensland is a \$10 million state government initiative involving a network of six walking tracks through the Gold Coast Hinterland, the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, Fraser Island, the Mackay Highlands, the Whitsundays, and the Wet Tropics.
- 2.10 Associate Professor Richard Hyde of the Centre for Sustainable Design at the University of Queensland subsequently discussed environmentally sustainable design and the construction of tourism infrastructure. He outlined Green Globe 21, a travel and tourism industry based certification programme. Particular detail was provided on the Novotel Ibis Hotel in Homebush Bay and the influence of the concept of sustainability at the master planning level.
- 2.11 Delegates travelled that afternoon to Cairns where the remainder of the conference was held.

## Day Three – Wednesday 26 July 2006

- 2.12 Andrew Skeat, Executive Director of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, opened the session at the Shangri-La Hotel with a talk on the management of tourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, the largest World Heritage area in the world at 350,000 square kilometres. The value of the industry associated with the Great Barrier Reef is \$5.1 billion. Mr Skeat talked about how the tourism industry centred on the Great Barrier Reef is considered to be a sustainable industry. This is due to regulation of the industry by requiring operators to obtain a permit and through the operation of various plans. There are two levels of planning – plans of management and zoning plans – in addition to local plans. The key pressures on the Great Barrier Reef were identified as being climate change, water quality, and fishing, in addition to natural pressures such as the crown of thorns starfish and cyclones.
- 2.13 Col McKenzie, Executive Director of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators then discussed ecotourism in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park from the perspective of operators.

- 2.14 Later in the morning, Committee representatives from various Australian jurisdictions were given the opportunity to provide the conference with an overview of the activities of their committees in the last 12 months.
- 2.15 Ted Warren MP outlined the work of the Sessional Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Northern Territory. The Committee has launched an inquiry into invasive species and management programs in the Northern Territory. Major invasive species include mimosa pigra, cabomba weed, damba grass, cane toads, feral camels, feral pigs, rabbits, feral dogs, the yellow crazy ant, and the big-headed ant.
- 2.16 Angela D'Amore MP outlined some of the key activities of the NSW Standing Committee on Public Works, which included: the report completed in November 2005 on infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas of NSW; the conduct of an inquiry into municipal waste management in NSW; and an inquiry into sports ground management in NSW. A copy of Ms D'Amore's presentation is attached as Appendix One.
- 2.17 This was followed by an overview by the Hon Ian Armstrong MP of the activities of the NSW Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management in the previous two years including its report on better approaches to salinity and drought management.
- 2.18 Mick Gentleman MLA reported on the work of the ACT Standing Committee on Planning and Environment, notably its issues paper on the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO biosphere reserve, as well as its new inquiry into exposure draft planning reform legislation and scrutiny of a land auction for a significant factory outlet and bulky goods centre.
- 2.19 Senator Stephen Parry, Acting Chair of the Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Public Works, discussed an amendment bill introduced in the Senate that proposed to alter the threshold value of works that must be referred to the public works committee from \$6 million to \$15 million. The Bill also proposed to alter the definition of a public work to clarify that works funded through public-private partnerships must be referred to the committee. In addition, Senator Parry drew attention to a trend in lessors providing incentives for potential leases, which has the effect of reducing the actual cost of the project for the Commonwealth but enables the private sector to maintain lease payments at a higher level.
- 2.20 Dr Mal Washer MP, Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage, provided an overview of the Committee's inquiry into sustainable cities. In its report, the Committee recommended that the Australian Government establish an Australian sustainability charter and set national targets in relation to water, transport, energy, building design, and planning, amongst other things. It also recommended that an independent Australian sustainability commission be established and that all new relevant government policy proposals be evaluated as to possible impact on urban sustainability.
- 2.21 Joanne Duncan MP spoke on behalf of the Victorian Environment and Natural Resources Committee. The Committee completed a report on the energy services industry which considered the role of commercial services in promoting energy efficiency in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

- 2.22 Lin Thorp MLC of the Tasmanian Joint Standing Committee on Environment, Resources and Development provided an update of the Committee's continuing inquiry into waste management in Tasmania.
- 2.23 Steve Chadwick MP and Eric Roy MP presented on behalf of the New Zealand Local Government and Environment Committee. They identified legislative scrutiny as the key role and responsibility of their committee. Some comments were also made regarding ecotourism in New Zealand, notably some of the challenges faced.
- 2.24 The presiding member of the South Australian Public Works Committee, Vini Ciccarello MP, highlighted the significant power of the Committee to delay a government's capital works agenda due to the requirement that public capital works projects with construction costs of more than \$4 million be examined by the Committee (construction cannot commence until the report has been tabled). In addition, a minority report is to be attached to the majority report when tabled. However, Ms Ciccarello noted that: minority reports are uncommon; a tradition has developed of members working together; and significant projects are not delayed for political reasons.
- 2.25 The presiding member of the South Australian Environment, Resources and Development Committee, Lyn Breuer MP, outlined the Committee's report on the Eyre Peninsula bushfire and native vegetation inquiry. She also noted that a big part of the Committee's work is to consider plan amendment reports, highlighting that, for the first time, the committee had resolved to disallow a plan amendment report and put it to Parliament. This matter involved Adelaide City Council and a situation where the Council owned the land, was partner to the development, and was the planning assessment and approval body. However, Parliament rose for the state election before the report was debated.
- 2.26 The Hon Louise Pratt MLC discussed the work of the Western Australian Environment and Public Affairs Committee. Most of the work in the previous 12 months related to petitions that had come before parliament. The Committee was planning to look at utilities hardship and the way in which the government manages the affordability of utilities. The committee was also intending to look into renewable energy.
- 2.27 The presiding member of the South Australian Natural Resources Committee, John Rau MP, provided an overview of the Committee's inquiry into the Saline Water Disposal Basins in South Australia which acknowledged the important role of salt interception infrastructure whilst identifying a number of concerns. The second report resulted from issues raised during the Committee's consideration of levies proposed by Natural Resources Management Boards.
- 2.28 The Tasmanian Public Works Committee received nine references in 2005-06, mainly in relation to hospitals, roads and schools. The Committee is now able to conduct meetings electronically in certain circumstances.
- 2.29 Barbara Stone MP outlined the work of the Queensland Public Works Committee, noting that its project-based reports centred on health facilities, particularly primary health care centres in the Torres Strait. It is also conducting inquiries into the

Chapter 2

redevelopment of Sir David Longlands Correctional Centre and the Roma Street Fire and Ambulance Station project.

- 2.30 In the afternoon, delegates travelled by boat to Green Island where Anita Pleuger of Green Island Resort informed delegates of the redevelopment of Green Island as an ecotourism resort. This was followed by an inspection led by Steve Howarth, the Chief Engineer, before delegates returned by boat to Cairns.

#### Day Four – Thursday 27 July 2006

- 2.31 The fourth day of the conference focused on the Great Barrier Reef with delegates spending the day inspecting the Reef by boat. Chelsea Ingwersen, Environmental Manager, Great Adventures, provided information on the Reef BioSearch program and Great Adventures (an ecotourism operator).
- 2.32 The conference formally concluded at the end of the day.

#### Day Five – Friday 28 July 2006

- 2.33 An optional field trip was scheduled for the fifth day of the conference. Delegates travelled on the Kuranda Scenic Railway and heard a presentation on the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway by Max Shepherd, the General Manager of Skyrail Rainforest Cableway.

# Appendix One – Report from the NSW Standing Committee on Public Works

**National Conference of Parliamentary Public Works and Environment Committees, Brisbane and Cairns, NSW Jurisdictional Round up 2005/2006, presented by Ms Angela D'Amore MP, Wednesday 26 July 2006**

My name is Angela D'Amore and I am the state member for Drummoyne, an inner city electorate in Sydney. I am pleased to outline some of the key activities of the New South Wales Standing Committee on Public Works over the last 12 months. As a committee member, I would also like to outline our two current inquiries which are due for completion this year.

Firstly, there is a report on infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas of New South Wales which we completed in November 2005. The inquiry ran for nine months and had over 100 submissions and 28 witnesses. The inquiry commenced in April last year and looked at infrastructure management on the New South Wales coast which is expanding.

The trigger for the inquiry was the rising population or sea change growth being experienced across New South Wales's coastal regions. The arrival of sea changers to coastal communities bring with them a high expectation of infrastructure and service levels which are currently absent. While the surge of sea change residents has created new infrastructure demands, this is exacerbated by pre-existing infrastructure deficiencies in our coastal areas.

The committee's report provides a snapshot of critical infrastructure issues, including: the pressing demands for service needed by concentrated aged communities in coastal areas; the tension between preservation of the environmental qualities of the coast and the desire for development; the lack of employment diversity for economic growth in coastal areas; and the infrastructure resourcing problems being faced by coastal councils. The committee argued that the management of infrastructure pressures in coastal New South Wales can be achieved through clearer targets for coastal development, along with the measurement of and accountability for meeting those targets.

The committee proposed a new coastal management policy framework. The committee recommended linking new regional strategies currently being prepared by the New South Wales department of planning with the accountability mechanism of a coastal cabinet subcommittee. Furthermore, the committee recommended public reporting by the coastal cabinet subcommittee on the progress of targets in each regional plan through an annual regional report card. The committee also argued that the combination of monitoring by the cabinet subcommittee and public accountability imposed by the regional report card would make the regional strategies a far more effective tool than previous strategies. In fact, the committee looked at the regional strategies used in south-east Queensland as a model for some of its recommendations for the design of regional strategies in New South Wales.

The response from the New South Wales government to the coastal inquiry has been positive. While cabinet has not as yet formed a coastal subcommittee a newly formed infrastructure cabinet committee is tasked with examining infrastructure provision. Also, additional information and targets are being integrated into regional planning.

The committee is currently engaged in two inquiries for the remainder of year: the inquiry into municipal waste management in New South Wales and the inquiry into sports grounds management in New South Wales. The waste management inquiry, launched in January 2006, is examining how waste management and recycling rates can be improved in council residential waste collection. We have a lot of development occurring in New South Wales and it is becoming an ever increasing issue. This inquiry deals with the role of government in waste management and prevention and the balance of regulation and market incentives in the waste industry.

Current policy approaches to environmental externalities of waste, such as greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, are being examined by the committee. The inquiry is also considering best practice models for alternative waste technologies and local government waste management utilising private-public partnerships. The analysis also includes examining market based mechanisms to give incentives to residents and councils to reduce waste to landfill, such as a landfill allocation trading scheme currently used in the UK which is based on carbon credit trading models for greenhouse gas reduction. The New South Wales government's landfill and waste management monopoly in the Sydney basin is also being examined. We certainly had some interesting submissions on that issue. The inquiry has received approximately 56 submissions and has heard from 19 witnesses. The inquiry report is due for completion in September 2006.

The final inquiry for the committee in this parliamentary session is examination of sports ground management by local government. That is certainly something close to my heart because I have 270 fields in my local electorate. The inquiry is examining five main themes. Firstly, the committee is looking at the adequacy of the provision of sports grounds in key demand areas. Increasing urban development and changing demographics combined with greater participation in sport and active leisure is creating changes in demand for the community sporting facilities from one region to another. The committee will examine how state and local government planning mechanisms are dealing with these changes. The committee will also look at criteria used to determine the provision of sports facilities and how the viability of sportsgrounds should be evaluated in terms of broader policy objectives, such as health outcomes, open space and community cohesion.

A second concern is the updating and refurbishment of sportsgrounds and supporting infrastructure. Improvements and maintenance costs of sportsground infrastructure, such as lighting, amenity blocks and car parks, are increasing and replacement of items can represent a large capital cost to our local communities and councils. Capital improvements are funded by councils and through capital assistance programs from the state government, such as the Department of Sports and Recreation which currently allocates about \$5 million a year to assist councils to upgrade those facilities. The committee will examine the provision of funding for facilities in addressing priority community concerns.

Thirdly, there is the issue of each council's pricing policy for facilities. Councils have to balance the recovery of some costs from the community, organisations using sporting fields, against the objectives of providing equitable and accessible facilities for the community as a whole, including groups with special needs. In addition, consideration should be given to the efficient allocation of access between groups to preserve time for sportsground rehabilitation and to provide additional capacity for ad hoc requirements. As the policies and administrative practices for usage vary between councils, state government and private providers the committee will review different access and pricing policies.



Environmental issues, including water conservation and ground maintenance, are also being considered. A recent issue raised in the media is deterioration of our sportsgrounds caused by the lack of water—we are suffering quite a severe drought in New South Wales—and reduced maintenance being exacerbated by overuse by our sporting groups and communities. The committee will examine how these issues can be addressed through environmental management and engineering strategies such as improved drainage and stormwater systems.

The fifth and final issue canvassed is the impact arising from sports facilities used on residential amenities, public liability and local security. One of the consequences of the increased use of sporting facilities is the associated noise, traffic and pedestrian activity generated. The committee will examine how councils are attempting to balance community concerns about noise and amenity arising from the use of sportsgrounds and the use of improved technology to address this issue.

Another concern is the increasing cost of public liability insurance for councils resulting from incidents occurring at sportsgrounds. There is a tendency to seek formal use agreements with organisations and groups to provide legal protection from claims or alternatively prohibit certain activities on council facilities. The committee will examine these impacts and how they can be managed better in the future. These are the current areas of interest of the committee. I would like to thank delegates for the opportunity to outline our activities in New South Wales. Thank you.