



Chairman
Standing Committee of Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

NSW COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SUBMISSION ON

Dear Chairman

INQUIRY INTO ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

I am pleased to respond on behalf of the NSW Council on Environmental Education (NSW CEE) to the Public Works Legislative Assembly Committee Inquiry into Energy Consumption in Residential Buildings. Our submission focuses on *strategies to address increasing energy consumption and to improve the sustainability of residential buildings, specifically consumer awareness and education.*

The NSW CEE is a government advisory body with legislative responsibilities to provide advice to government on environmental education issues (further information available at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/cee). The NSW CEE prepared the first NSW Government Environmental Education Plan *Learning for Sustainability*, (enclosed) which was endorsed by Cabinet and released by the Minister for the Environment in December 2002. *Learning for Sustainability* sets out a strategic framework to develop environmental education in NSW over the next three years. It strives to build the capacity of the whole community to be even more involved in making environmental improvements.

Learning for Sustainability identifies a central role for education in achieving sustainability. Accordingly, education, communication and training should be an essential component of any strategy designed to encourage sustainable energy use.

Environmental learning is lifelong and takes a variety of forms, not only the more familiar formal education and training in schools, TAFE and universities, but also non-formal programs and activities such as:

- personal education programs
- information products and services, including print, web and telephone services
- training, development, extension, awareness-raising and site specific programs, including workplace and community-based programs
- public communication programs, including information delivered through campaigns and mass media
- community development programs.

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Learning for Sustainability promotes comprehensive environmental education that is closely integrated with the suite of other tools used to address sustainability issues. These tools include public policy, regulation, economic incentives, infrastructure, research and monitoring and reporting. Although none of these tools alone can provide the impetus to move towards sustainability in NSW, they can each play a complementary role when used together. The role of each tool in relation to the others must be tailored to meet specific needs.

To effectively address specific sustainability issues such as energy conservation, environmental education must comprise a comprehensive set of programs designed to be complementary across all relevant sectors, ie all stages of the formal education sector, government agencies, the community, non-government organisations, industry, local government.

In relation to sustainable energy use, the Plan includes the following specific strategy and action.

Strategy 2.2: Deliver specific environmental education programs that address priority sustainability issues in a coordinated fashion

Action 9.10 Promote sustainable energy use and reduce greenhouse gases, including:

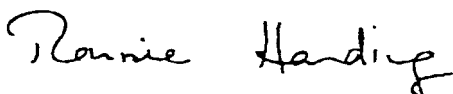
- education components of energy generation and renewable energy programs such as Green Power
- education components of energy conservation and energy efficiency programs for: government (such as the national Cities for Climate Protection program, Energy Smart Councils and the application of Government Energy Management Plans); industry (such as Energy Smart Business, the national Greenhouse Challenge and the building component of *Sustainable Urban Settlements: Guidelines for regional NSW*, [DUAP 2000b]); and schools and households (such as Energy Smart Zone, Greenhouse Action and Cool Communities)
- promotion of Energy Smart products to consumers
- promotion of the role of trees, especially newly planted forests, as capable of providing offsets to greenhouse gas reduction.

In addition, the NSW Government environmental education program *Our Environment – It's a Living Thing* (Action 20) has incorporated a number of energy conservation messages. *Our Environment – It's a Living Thing* is aimed at improving the environment by educating and motivating the people of NSW to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. The program, which includes an advertising campaign and community education, connects initiatives from across state government agencies and has a number of local government partners. For more information visit www.livingthing.net.au

In summary, NSW CEE promotes the inclusion of comprehensive consumer awareness and education as an essential component of any strategy designed to encourage sustainable energy use. This environmental education should be closely integrated with the suite of other tools used to address sustainability issues (such as policy, legislation or economic incentives) and should engage all relevant sectors, ie all stages of the formal education sector, government agencies, the community, non-government organisations, industry, local government.

If you would like any further information about this submission or *Learning for Sustainability*, please contact NSW CEE Executive Officer, Mr Geoff Young, on (ph) 9995 5363.

Regards



Ronnie Harding
Chair, NSW Council on Environmental Education