



NSW GOVERNMENT

SUBMISSION

TO THE

PUBLIC BODIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

REPORTING IN THE NSW PUBLIC SECTOR

November 2007

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1. Introduction

The NSW Government welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Public Bodies Review Committee Inquiry into Environmental Impact Reporting in the NSW Public Sector. This submission has been prepared by the Department of Environment and Climate Change in consultation with relevant NSW Government agencies.

The purpose of this submission is to put forward the Government's views on the concept of 'environmental impact reporting' in the public sector, to clarify current reporting practices in relation to current legislative requirements and the priorities outlined in the State Plan, and to outline the Government's intention to simplify and streamline environmental reporting in the NSW public sector.

1.1 The Challenges in Environmental Impact Reporting

The environment is intrinsically complex. It is made up of many interrelated elements, with multiple impacts and variables stemming from any event within it. The responses of an ecosystem to disturbances are complex, often unexpected and inherently difficult to describe or measure. The very nature of the environment, which is constantly evolving and interrelated, coupled with an incomplete knowledge of its workings, causes difficulties reporting environmental impacts. It is an enormous challenge to identify and collect relevant data at the correct scale.

Depending on the methodology selected, reporting on environmental impacts can be complex and onerous to the point where the cost of environmental impact reporting can outweigh its benefits.

State and territory agencies retain the responsibility for much of the collection and maintenance of environmental data in Australia, while local governments, industry, independent agencies and science agencies are also important sources of information. Australia has led the way using modelling and remote sensing techniques, and many advances in data collection and accessibility have been made in recent years.

Indicators

Although the consensus seems to be that key economic indicators are well established, there seemed to be less agreement in the environmental area, although there has been some progress on development of international standards for corporate environmental reporting. Reporting methodologies are well advanced for some areas such as greenhouse gas emissions, however, reliable, summary measures are less developed for other dimensions of environmental impacts, such as on river health and land degradation.

At the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) World Forum on Key Indicators in 2004, there appeared to be a consensus that while consistency in reporting is essential to the provision of information, the topics about which information is sought evolve and change.

There are many sets of environmental indicators proposed, developed or in use in Australia. Examples include the natural resource management (NRM) monitoring and evaluation framework used by the Commonwealth and States; and Sydney Water's uses of environmental indicators for its environmental compliance reports.

There are likely to be improvements in indicator sets as the policy and environmental context changes. Experience will determine when indicators are useful and whether they can be simplified. In other words, environmental indicators have a life-cycle – they need to be developed, used and discarded if they are not deemed to be relevant for an environmental issue or if they are unnecessarily difficult to populate.

There is a tension between reviewing and discarding indicators and building long-term datasets to populate the indicators. Indicators are only useful for showing changes in the environment where time series data are available.

1.2 Principles for Environmental Reporting

Key principles in environmental reporting include:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- Credibility
- Ecologically Sustainable Development.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) sets out the following principles:

- Principles to determine report quality: materiality, stakeholder inclusiveness, sustainability context, and completeness.
- Principles to define report quality: balance, comparability, accuracy, timeliness, reliability, and clarity.

2. Overview

The NSW Government is committed to managing its resources efficiently and effectively. This means targeting services, obtaining the best value for money, and ensuring transparency and public accountability.

Overall, the reporting requirements that are currently in place seek to balance the dual aims of maximising public disclosure and managing the costs of data collection and reporting on individual agencies, especially the smaller ones.

There are three primary levels of reporting that demonstrate transparency and accountability beyond the traditional finance dimension:

- i) Reporting on individual agency activities in terms of economic, environmental and social objectives;
- ii) Cross-portfolio reporting on a single policy area; and
- iii) Reporting that provides a consolidated picture of the performance of the NSW public sector.

A brief description of each level of reporting follows. Attachment A lists examples of the wide range of reports that NSW Public Sector agencies prepare which incorporate issues of environmental impact.

2.1 Reporting at the Agency Level

Agencies are required to report to Parliament each year on a range of matters under the *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985* and *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984*.

This includes a summary review of their operations and discussion of their management and activities.

The Annual Reports legislation has been the primary framework for agency reporting to Parliament. However, the Government has supplemented and improved the framework.

To date, NSW Government agencies have been required to report at least annually on their: financial performance; adherence with the Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP); Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policies (WRAPP); and the Cleaner Government Fleet Program amongst many other indicators. This reporting has provided information on key environmental indicators for the NSW Government. Details of these programs are outlined below.

There have been a range of reviews into these reporting requirements including an internal Government Red Tape Review and an Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) Review. As a result of the recommendations from these reviews the Government is currently working on the development of a NSW Government Sustainability Policy which will simplify and streamline environmental reporting requirements for NSW Government Agencies. An outline of these proposals is at section 6 below.

Results and Services

In addition to the above reporting, as part of the Budget process, all agencies in the General Government Sector are required to address key strategic issues using the 'Results and Services' approach. Results and Services Plans (RSPs) are high level service delivery and funding plans.

The foundation of the RSP is a sound *results logic* which requires agencies to describe the 'cause and effect' chains that link their services and results. The environmental results indicators and service measures developed by line agencies for inclusion in their RSPs are a primary means for demonstrating that the logic is correct and that the services provided are achieving the results expected.

2.2 Cross-Portfolio Reporting

The NSW Government regularly reports on key policy issues across portfolio areas at the state-wide level, indicating the performance of the public sector. An example of this is the *State of the Environment Report*, which is produced by the Department of Environment and Climate Change with the assistance of other agencies. The report is a comprehensive attempt to evaluate the condition of the NSW environment, to identify the pressures that can affect the health of the environment and to identify the contribution of NSW Government agencies to achieving environmental goals.

2.3 Whole-of-Government Reporting

DECC produces a consolidated annual report on the WRAPP program for the NSW Government. This data is used to report progress against the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy and the National Packaging Covenant.

The *NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2003* provided a framework for reducing waste and making better use of our resources. It was a first for Australia. It was established under the *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001*.

The *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy and Performance Report 2006* combines a performance report against the recycling and other targets set in 2003 and key programs implemented in NSW during this time.

It also updates the *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy 2003*.

State Plan reporting falls into the whole of government reporting category as will the streamlined and simplified reporting being proposed under the NSW Government Sustainability Policy (outlined in Section 6).

3. Environmental Impact Reporting in the NSW Public Sector

3.1 The State Plan

The State Plan was released on 14 November 2006. Its purpose is to guide the delivery of government services in NSW over the next 10 years. The plan is structured around six key areas, one of these being 'Environment for Living'. These areas are further separated into goals and priorities with targets set for each.

ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING		
OUR GOALS	OUR PRIORITIES	OUR TARGETS
Securing our Supply of Water and Energy	E1 A secure and sustainable water supply for all users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet performance standards for service reliability and water quality. Increase water recycling both in Sydney and regional centres. Improve efficiency of water use. Restore water extraction from rivers to sustainable levels.
	E2: A reliable electricity supply with increased use of renewable energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve electricity reliability for NSW of 99.98% by 2016. Achieve 15% renewable energy consumption by 2020.
Practical Environmental Solutions	E3: Cleaner air and progress on greenhouse gas reductions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet national air quality goals in NSW. Cut greenhouse emissions by 60% by 2050.
	E4: Better outcomes for native vegetation, biodiversity, land, rivers, and coastal waterways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet NSW Government targets for protection of our natural environment.
Improved Urban Environments	E5: Jobs closer to home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of people who live within 30 minutes of a city or major centre by public transport in metropolitan Sydney.
	E6: Housing Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a supply of land and a mix of housing that meets demand.
	E7: Improve the efficiency of the road network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain current travel speeds on Sydney's major road corridors despite increase in travel volumes.
	E8: More people using parks, sporting and recreational facilities, and participating in the arts and cultural activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of visits to State Government parks and reserves by 20 per cent by 2016. Increase the number of people participating in sporting activities and physical activity by 10 per cent by 2016. Increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10 per cent by 2016.

Table 1: State Plan goals, priorities and targets for E1-E8 (Environment for Living)

Cutting red tape is a specific priority in the plan.

The State Plan website is designed to help the community track progress towards meeting the targets set in the State Plan. It will be updated as new performance information becomes available.

There is a current Public Accounts Committee inquiry into State Plan Reporting, which will examine reporting and review mechanisms for the NSW Government's State Plan.

The Government has committed to integrating State Plan priorities and delivery structures with decision making in the Budget cycle. This process requires robust performance information to ensure that funds are allocated as efficiently and effectively as possible to services that achieve specified results that are consistent with the Government's announced priorities.

Within this framework, environmental reporting is an increasingly important element in the allocation of funds towards the Government's environmental and natural resource management priorities. Given the costs associated with environmental reporting and limits on the amount of Budget funding available for this purpose, it is important that the most cost-effective reporting measures are chosen. This includes consideration of the costs to agencies of complying with environmental reporting requirements.

3.1.1 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER)

An important element of public sector environmental impact reporting is the evaluation of the effectiveness of government actions and investment and whether these have had the desired environmental outcome. In the past this evaluation and reporting process has been based on ad hoc and available data.

The NSW natural resource and environment agencies and Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) are currently working to establish a coordinated and strategic system of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on natural resource condition in line with the 13 new State Plan targets. Local Governments, landholders and other natural resource managers are being engaged by these agencies to capture the full spectrum of data, programs and reporting opportunities.

DECC is now the lead agency for eight of thirteen 'themes' under the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting program, which is the basis for State Plan Priority E4. The merger of DEC and DNR has improved coordination of work under these themes. The Department of Water and Energy (DWE) leads two of the themes and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) lead three, and all three agencies work together on each theme where there are common areas of interest or specific expertise to contribute.

In the 2007/08 financial year, significant funding from the National Action Plan (NAP) and Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) will allow DECC to establish baseline data and monitoring programs for natural resource condition (vegetation, fauna, estuaries, soils). The funding will also help develop a program to gather information about the capacity of land managers in natural resource management. Pilot programs have been conducted into reporting of environmental impacts on estuaries and coastal lakes and vegetation condition in the Hunter.

The MER program builds on or adapts existing programs where possible. Examples include the Sustainable Rivers Audit, vegetation mapping and soil measurement. New protocols and

standards are being developed for the monitoring of threatened species and fauna and vegetation condition mapping.

The data from the MER program will be used for a range of reporting requirements including - the E4 State Plan targets, the performance of CMAs against their Catchment Action Plans, the State of the Environment Report and the proposed State of the Catchments reports. It is a more strategic and coordinated approach for comprehensively monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the condition of natural resources in NSW, where previously data was assembled from many disparate projects and sources.

The main aims of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting program are to provide:

- A more comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the state-wide condition of natural resources in NSW
- A rigorous framework to monitor the performance and direction of CMAs – and to assist them in evaluating whether their investment decisions in natural resource management are appropriate
- A method for measuring the impact and successes of government programs on the condition of natural resources
- Assistance in determining the causes of changes to the natural environment
- A comprehensive and streamlined source of data that can be used to report in several different formats (such as the State Plan and the State of the Environment report). This data can also feed into national reporting mechanisms such as the National Land and Water Resources Audit.

3.2 State of the Environment Reporting

New South Wales State of the Environment (SoE) Report describes the status of the main environmental issues in NSW. The report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of section 10 of the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991*.

SoE 2006 is the sixth SoE report prepared by the NSW Government with previous reports published in 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000 and 2003.

The SoE reports aim to provide credible, scientifically based environmental information to assist those involved in environmental policy and decision-making and managing the State's natural resources.

SoE 2006 is structured around six major themes: Toward Environmental Sustainability, Human Settlement, Atmosphere, Land, Water and Biodiversity. Thirty-seven environmental issues are reported within these themes through environmental data for 71 environmental indicators. These indicators are consistent with those covered in previous reports, and align closely with the core environmental indicators approved by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council in March 2000.

While the report is prepared by the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW, much of the material it contains involves extensive input by a wide range of government agencies, other organisations and individual specialists who provide data, analysis and interpretation, and review the assembled content of the report. The specialist input includes the advice and support of six independent scientific experts as well as members of the NSW State of the Environment Advisory Council.

The SoE Report is published by the NSW Government every three years.

An important element of SoE reporting is the identification of responses from both government and non-government organisations to the identified pressure and status of the environment.

From 2009 the NSW SoE report will be directly linked to forward planning and priority setting processes for the NSW Government.

Agencies will include selected high level indicators from the SoE report in their annual Results and Services Plans. This will embed the review of progress towards the State-wide targets into the corporate planning processes of agencies, helping to ensure delivery of the targets is resourced as part of departments' core business through adaptive management.

Lead agencies with responsibility for indicators in the SoE will prepare a response report to the issues and information contained in the SoE report on their indicators. It is intended that this report be made public (for example tabled in Parliament) within six months of the release of the SoE Report. Agency actions within the response report will be used to inform agencies' annual Results and Services Plans. This will ensure that the outcomes of the SoE Report are integrated into agency forward planning and priority setting processes, and ensure that Government programs are contributing towards the State-wide targets for NRM.

All states and territories in Australia except the Northern Territory produce State of the Environment Reports. State and territory government web sites have information about their environmental reporting processes.

Local government environmental reporting

The Department of Local Government also has involvement in environmental reporting. Its main focus is to administer the requirements for local council State of the Environment reporting, as outlined in section 428(2)(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993* and clauses 218-226 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

The Department has recently undertaken a review of these requirements as part of a wider assessment of the local government planning and reporting framework. As a result of this review, a number of concerns have been identified with local council State of the Environment Reports, Social Plans and Management Plans.

Accordingly, the Department of Local Government has developed a proposal to reshape the planning and reporting framework for local government. The Integrated Planning and Reporting project focuses on improving the sustainability of local councils and the communities they serve.

Under the proposals, councils will be required to strengthen their strategic planning focus by preparing and implementing long-term community strategic plans. These plans will be centred on "quadruple bottom line" themes: Social; Environmental; Economic; and Governance. Councils will be required to undertake environmental management, monitoring and reporting initiatives that support their community strategic plan.

In line with these reforms – and in recognition of changes to natural resource monitoring, evaluation and review currently taking place at State level – it is proposed to remove the requirements for local councils to prepare a separate State of the Environment Report and to replace it with requirements for environmental monitoring and reporting that are directly linked to the new integrated planning and reporting framework for local government.

Subject to approval, the proposed timetable for introducing these reforms is from September 2008, following the NSW local government elections.

State of the Beaches reporting

The State of the Beaches report is a scorecard of recreational water quality measured at estuarine sites in Sydney and along the coast from the Illawarra to the Hunter. The program is run by the Beachwatch section of the Department of Environment and Climate Change. There are three levels of reporting:

- Daily reports at Sydney beaches, including
 - Beachwatch Bulletin - General conditions at Sydney's ocean beaches from Palm Beach south to Cronulla - issued daily from 1 October to 30 April.
 - Harbourwatch Bulletin - Water quality conditions in the major catchments of Sydney Harbour, Botany Bay and Lower Georges River - issued daily from 1 October to 30 April.
- State of the beaches monthly report - A snapshot of water quality at ocean and harbour beaches is issued monthly throughout the year for the following Sydney metropolitan areas:
 - Northern Sydney beaches
 - Sydney City Beaches
 - Sydney Southern Beaches.
- State of the beaches annual report. A scientific analysis and summary of water quality at over 130 monitoring sites from the Hunter region through the Sydney Metropolitan area to the Illawarra - issued annually in October.

This water quality reporting is a measure of the success of government initiatives on stormwater and wastewater management and licensing of sewage treatment plants.

State of the Parks Reporting

State of the parks reporting provides a snapshot of the condition and management of the NSW park system in a publicly accessible way.

State of the Parks reports are produced by the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the information presented helps communicate how well the NSW Government is managing the park system. This information is also used to better understand the effectiveness of management actions and improve management where necessary. *State of the Parks 2004* - provides an initial effort at presenting information on the condition and management of the park system.

Subsequent reports will show information on the trends, the condition of, and pressures on park values. The reports demonstrate that NSW is doing a good job of managing its parks, but identifies that there are areas where improvements can be made.

Air Quality Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring of air quality to assess compliance with the National Environment Protection Measure for Ambient Air Quality (AAQ). Annual Reports are prepared summarising the monitoring results and comparing these results to the AAQ NEPM goals. The latest report was the New South Wales Annual Compliance Report which was prepared in July 2006.

DECC produces daily and quarterly air quality monitoring reports.

Native Vegetation Reporting

The *NSW Native Vegetation Report Card* for 2006 and the *NSW Woody Vegetation Change 2004 – 2006 Report* provide a widespread picture of native vegetation in NSW.

These reports provide an invaluable insight into what is happening to the State's native vegetation in terms of both clearing and conservation.

The NSW Woody Vegetation Change 2004 – 2006 is based on Landsat satellite imagery which tracks woody vegetation change. There are plans to make this an annual report.

Currently, native vegetation clearing applications and approvals are reported on every six months.

The status of native vegetation in NSW is reported in chapter six (Biodiversity) of the State of the Environment Report 2006.

3.3 Annual Reports

Most reporting on environmental impacts in NSW government agency annual reports is done in the appendices, and describes the performance of the agency in regard to the Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP), the Cleaner Government Fleet Program and the Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP).

The Department of Commerce manages reporting on these matters for a number of other agencies in the NSW Public Sector through the Energy Services group of the Government Architects Office.

3.3.1 Department of Environment and Climate Change Annual Report

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) annual report describes many facets of environmental management and impact. DECC administers environment protection legislation which covers air and water quality, contaminated land, noise control, pesticides, hazardous chemicals, dangerous goods, radiation and waste.

The DECC reports against 29 performance indicators, covering strategic focus areas such as 'A healthier and cleaner environment' and 'Biodiversity protected and restored'. These follow the structure of the *DECC Corporate Plan*.

Elements of DECC's activities that are reported on in the annual report include prosecutions completed under EPA legislation, number and value of penalty infringement notices issued, and calls to the DECC Environment Line reporting pollution incidents. The environmental performance of DECC as an agency is also reported.

3.4 Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) Reporting

The NSW Government's Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) was announced by the Premier in September 1997. WRAPP requires all state government agencies and state owned corporations to develop and implement a WRAPP plan to reduce waste in four areas – paper products, office equipment and components, vegetation material, and construction and demolition material.

Agencies must also collect and periodically report data on:

- total quantities of scheduled wastes being generated and recycled; and
- total quantities of scheduled materials being purchased which contain recycled content.

WRAPP is a whole-of-government policy that aims to make NSW Government agencies and state owned corporations model waste managers by:

- reducing waste
- increasing recycling; and

- increasing purchases of recycled content products.

WRAPP also requires that priority be given to buying materials with recycled content where they are cost and performance competitive and reduce the amount of waste they generate.

WRAPP is administered by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The policy requires all state government agencies and state owned corporations to develop and implement a WRAPP plan to reduce waste in four scheduled areas:

- paper products;
- office equipment and components;
- vegetation material; and
- construction and demolition material.

Between 2003 and 2005 progress under WRAPP included:

- Paper recycling increased from 73% to 82%
- Purchasing of copy paper with a recycled content increased from 36% to 44%
- Recycling of construction and demolition materials increased from 75% to 89%
- The levels of all materials recycled by agencies resulted in a reduction of approximately 118,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Data from the WRAPP is used by DECC to compile NSW statistics for the measurement of progress against targets in the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy and the National Packaging Covenant.

While these initiatives have provided additional WRAPP reporting requirements, the DECC has streamlined the WRAPP guidelines in other areas to reduce the overall reporting requirements for agencies. Red tape reviews have further reduced reporting requirements for smaller agencies (see section 5: Red Tape Reviews – simplifying environmental reporting).

All NSW government agencies and state owned corporations are required to report progress every two years (see Premier's Memoranda 97-20, 99-19 and 03-05). Those with fewer than 200 staff now only have to report every 3 years in their Annual Report. Monitoring and reporting on the Policy is coordinated by the Sustainability Programs Division within the Department of Environment and Climate Change. The Department issues guidelines ahead of each reporting period to assist agencies in preparing their progress report.

The latest WRAPP progress report was released in 2006 for the period 2003-2005. The next WRAPP Progress Report is due on 31 August 2007.

Under the Policy, the Minister for the Environment is required to report to the Premier on agencies that are not complying with the WRAPP or their own WRAPP plans. The Department also prepares a whole-of-government report based on the information and data provided in individual agency reports.

Separate to the biennial progress report to the Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW), agencies must also include in their Annual Report a summary of the progress made against the requirements of the WRAPP in the following areas:

- Reducing the generation of waste (waste avoidance and minimisation)
- Resource recovery (waste reuse and recycling)
- The use of recycled material (purchase of recycled-content materials).

3.5 Cleaner Government Fleet Program

In November 2004 The Premier announced the Cleaner Government Fleet Program (Premier's Memorandum 2005-03). Under the Program agencies must progressively reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles to achieve a 20% reduction by 2007/08 (based on 2004/05 performance); and aims to save \$50 million on vehicle lease and fuel costs by 2007/08.

Under the Program every government agency was required to develop a Fleet Improvement Plan by 1 July 2005 to meet targets, improve the average 'environment performance score' of their fleet using the NSW Clean Car Benchmarks, and progressively reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions to achieve a 20% reduction by 2007/08 (based on 2004/05 performance). The Government fleet is currently on track to meet these targets. As per the original Memorandum, new targets will be set for 2008/09 and beyond.

The Department of Commerce, through Statefleet, is the lead agency managing the Government's Cleaner Fleet Initiative. Statefleet is currently in the process of developing new targets for the Cleaner Fleet initiative beyond July 2008 through the Cleaner Government Fleet Committee. As part of this process, reporting requirements for the initiative will also be amended to ensure consistency with the recommendations of the Internal Government Red Tape Review.

Since 2003 agencies with fleets of 25 to 99 cars have been required to have at least one petrol/electric hybrid fuel technology vehicle. For fleets comprising 100 or more vehicles, one percent of the fleet must be hybrid vehicles. The government fleet is currently exceeding this target; however availability of hybrid vehicles is still limited.

3.6 Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP)

The Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP) was announced in November 1998 to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions while also delivering energy and cost savings to NSW Government agencies. GEMP established targets to reduce state-wide total energy consumption in Government buildings by 15% by 2001/02 and 25% by 2005/06 (from 1995/96 levels), where cost-effectively feasible.

Additional related targets have been set since 1998. Buildings owned or tenanted by Government are to achieve certain star ratings under the Australian Building Greenhouse Rating Scheme (ABGR) (Premier's Memorandum 2004-4) and all Schedule 1 agencies must purchase 6% Green Power.

Annual reporting was done through EDGAR (Environmental Data Gathering and Reporting), a web-based reporting tool. This has been superseded by OSCAR (Online System for Comprehensive Activity Reporting).

Performance under GEMP

Although the energy use reduction targets under GEMP have not been easy to achieve (only 28 out of 111 agencies met their 2001/02 target of 15% reduction), the policy has resulted in no growth in energy use over the period and provided a 21% reduction (in real dollars) in agencies' energy bills from 1995/96 to 2002/03.

However, greenhouse gas emissions from office buildings reduced significantly over this time – by 18% between 1995/96 and 2002/03.

Seventeen government agencies have exceeded the 25% building energy reduction target by 2005/06 set in the existing GEMP.

Previous reviews of GEMP

GEMP has been reviewed over the last few years. A Parliamentary Standing Committee Inquiry in 2001 tabled a report in Parliament with 22 recommendations. In 2003 a Senior Officers Steering Committee developed an Action Plan and a Cabinet submission based on these recommendations.

Key issues raised from this series of reviews include:

- Absolute targets, as in GEMP, do not account for changes in demand for services (increased students, patients), levels of service provided (e.g. air-conditioning of schools), or efficiencies in doing so
- Targets should be in the form of greenhouse gas reductions (rather than energy) to provide flexibility in meeting them
- While agencies only had to implement actions which were cost effective, this criteria was not defined and agencies on the whole did not implement many actions
- Less than one third of agencies reported on time.

The recommendations from the reviews of GEMP will inform the development of the new NSW Sustainability Policy for NSW Government Agencies, as outlined in Section 6.

Current Status

The NSW Greenhouse Plan, released in November 2005, committed NSW to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050, and to return emissions to 2000 levels by 2025. These targets were subsequently included in the State Plan. The NSW Greenhouse Plan committed to strengthening GEMP as part of Government leading by example and contributing to the overall target for greenhouse gas emissions. It also committed to streamlining the Government's reporting on energy, fleets, waste, water and greenhouse with an efficient web-based reporting system. The government is currently working on a sustainability policy for NSW government agencies – see section 6.

4. NSW Reporting Responsibilities to the Commonwealth

There has been a strong drive towards using the internet to disseminate data and report on environmental impacts in the last decade. NSW is involved in online reporting of environmental information, including delivery of the Commonwealth State of the Environment report. An example of online delivery of geospatial information in NSW is the CANRI website – Community Access to Natural Resources Information.

There have been many examples where increased collaboration among agencies has achieved efficiencies in data integration, management and access. One of these is National Environment Protection Measure reporting, described below.

4.1 National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) Reporting

Collaborative efforts between the states and territories and the Commonwealth to implement NEPMs have meant that data on air quality and the emission of substances to the environment have continued to be collected, resulting in nationally consistent air quality and emissions data. These datasets are publicly available; for example the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) www.npi.gov.au.

4.2 OSCAR– Online System for Comprehensive Activity Reporting

OSCAR is a web-based data collection tool for recording of energy, waste and greenhouse data for Government programme reporting. It is maintained by the Australian Greenhouse Office.

OSCAR is an extension of the energy data gathering and reporting tool 'EDGAR' which has in the past successfully helped reduce the time needed to meet reporting requirements for government operations through the Whole of Government Energy Report 'WOGER.' To reduce the duplicative effort of reporting to multiple programmes, EDGAR has now been integrated into OSCAR version 6.0, streamlining the reporting process for those that are members of multiple programmes. This means that those affected will only need to report data common to these programmes once.

Several departments have noted that OSCAR is an efficient and effective method of reporting and data capture. NSW Health notes that to achieve maximum efficiencies in the reporting process it would be ideal to increase the provision of key consumption data from the utility providers and ensure capability to upload data into reporting systems such as OSCAR. NSW Health currently reports through EDGAR and is to implement OSCAR in the next three months.

4.3 Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Reporting

The NSW Government supports the use of the GRI reporting framework that enables organisations to communicate actions taken to improve the triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental performance), the outcomes of these actions and future strategies. The framework put forward by GRI applies a mix of core and additional indicators. In this way the 'footprint' or impact of the organisation upon the community can be measured and activities regarded as leading practice can be included in the reporting methodology. There are 30 environmental indicators under the GRI, organised under 9 key Aspects.

The key principles of the GRI framework include:

- Transparency as means of maximising accountability;
- Inclusiveness and involving stakeholders in the development of reporting structures;
- Audibility and external verification;
- Accuracy;
- Completeness in regards to scope of factors being reported on;
- Relevance of factors being reported on;
- Timeliness;
- Neutrality – fair and factual presentation;
- Comparability and benchmarking;
- Context (how best to link organisational performance to macro level concerns); and
- Clarity (includes both how understandable the information is and its usefulness).

4.4 National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting

The *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* establishes a single, national scheme for reporting greenhouse gas emissions, abatement actions, and energy consumption and production by corporations from 1 July 2008, and will support the introduction of a national emissions trading scheme in 2011-12.

Much of the detail of the reporting system will be contained in the regulations to the Act. NSW is participating in the development of these detailed regulations, which will include definitions relevant to determining liable parties and the scope of coverage of the scheme, methods and criteria for calculating greenhouse emissions, reductions, removals and offsets, the framework for registering reporting entities, the reporting obligations of liable entities and the compliance framework.

While the system will support a number of existing energy and greenhouse gas emission reporting requirements in NSW, it will be important to minimise any undue reporting requirements.

5. Red Tape Reviews – Simplifying Environmental Reporting

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that regulation is appropriate, effective and efficient, with the objective of maximising net benefit to the community and minimising regulatory burden and red tape. To that end, cutting red tape is a specific priority in the State Plan (priority P3).

Several red tape reviews have been conducted over the past 12 months. These reviews have made many recommendations, several of them referring to environmental reporting. The recommendations in regard to environmental reporting are outlined below.

Internal Government Red Tape Review

Under Stage 1 of the Government's internal red tape review, the reporting requirements relating to energy management are being amended to remove data reporting requirements for the 70 per cent of agencies operating predominantly from within office buildings, and instead require data to be provided by those agencies that administer joint tenancy arrangements.

In addition, small agencies will report on their waste management and energy performance every three years rather than annually. The Government will continue to monitor such requirements to ensure that they are appropriately targeted and do not create unnecessary compliance burdens particularly for small agencies.

The recommendations of the review relating to environmental impact reporting are outlined below:

Recommendation 12.2 That vehicles available to NSW Government employees be restricted as necessary (currently only V8 powered vehicles are not available) to help address energy and environmental concerns about State Fleet vehicles packaged on a 100 per cent private use basis.

Recommendation 12.3 That only agencies with the largest vehicle fleets, accounting for 95% of the NSW Government fleet, should be subject to the Fleet Improvement Plan. Agencies should assume they are exempt, unless otherwise advised by the Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability. State Fleet and other fleet providers should advise DEUS which agencies comprise 95% of the fleet.

Recommendation 15.1 That DEUS proceed with its proposal to remove the Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP) data reporting requirements for the 70 per cent of agencies operating predominately from within office buildings, and instead require data to be provided by those that administer joint tenancy arrangements (for example, Crown Property).

Recommendation 15.2 That agencies with fewer than 200 staff be exempt from annual GEMP reporting. These agencies should report every three years.

Recommendation 17.1 That agencies with fewer than 200 staff be exempted from providing a WRAPP report to DECC. These agencies should be required to report on WRAPP every three years in their Annual Report only.

Recommendation 17.2 That agencies exempted from WRAPP reporting only be required to detail progress, not quantitative measures, in this report.

Recommendation 17.3 That a new Treasury Circular be issued to clarify WRAPP reporting requirements, including examples.

Recommendation 17.4 That DECC educate agencies on what is required in WRAPP reporting and on the flexibility of WRAPP requirements.

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) *Investigation into the Burden of Regulation and Improving Regulatory Efficiency*

RECOMMENDATION 21

That the Government strongly supports NSW's engagement in, and implementation of recommendations arising out of, current national initiatives to develop a nationally consistent framework for greenhouse gas and energy reporting and an agreed national model for greenhouse gas emissions trading, as a priority area for reform.

NSW Government Response:

The NSW Government strongly supports this recommendation, and has led States and Territories in the design of a potential national emissions trading scheme. At the February 2007 meeting of the Council for the Australian Federation, Premiers and Chief Ministers of State and Territory Governments made a commitment to introduce a national emissions trading scheme by the end of 2010 should the Commonwealth refuse to do so. On 13 April 2007, COAG agreed to establish a mandatory national greenhouse gas emissions and energy reporting system, with the detailed design to be settled after the Prime Minister's Task Group on Emissions Trading reports at the end of May.

RECOMMENDATION 22

In the short term, that the Government:

- a) Continue to encourage the Australian Government to recognise NSW Action Plans as meeting the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Assessment (EEOA) program requirements.
- b) Aim to allow increased flexibility in the Action Plan requirements where greater consistency with EEOA requirements can be achieved.

NSW Government Response:

The NSW Government supports this recommendation, and is working with the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources to minimise the overlap and improve consistency between the two programs. The NSW Government will continue to encourage the Commonwealth Government to recognise NSW Action Plans as meeting the EEOA program requirements. The NSW Government will also continue to look for options to increase flexibility in the Action Plan requirements, such as through streamlining of annual reporting requirements, to achieve greater consistency with EEOA requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 24

That the Government enter into an assessment bilateral agreement under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) with the Commonwealth, and expedite the signing of such an agreement. In the longer term, the Government should also consider entering into further approval bilateral agreements for appropriate specific developments, classes of development or places, or processes.

NSW Government Response:

The NSW and Commonwealth Governments entered into an assessment bilateral agreement under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 in January 2007. A copy of the agreement is available at www.environment.gov.au/epbc.

The NSW Government will now work with the Commonwealth Government to develop an approvals bilateral agreement, based on NSW management arrangements and authorisation processes which meet the requirements of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

RECOMMENDATION 37

That the Government conduct a post-implementation review of BASIX within five years of implementation to identify whether BASIX is meeting its objectives, and publicly report its findings. This review should include an updated cost-benefit analysis of BASIX, based on the Department of Planning's monitoring of *actual* water and energy/emissions savings.

NSW Government Response:

The NSW Government supports this recommendation. Ongoing evaluation of BASIX, including working with energy and water utilities to monitor actual water and energy/emissions savings, is underway. The NSW Government will conduct a review of the BASIX energy targets in mid-2008. The current monitoring work being undertaken with energy and water utilities as well as an Australian first pilot into cogeneration for residential developments will be considered as part of the review.

RECOMMENDATION 71

That the Government establish a standing working group consisting of senior officers from IPART; Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability; Department of Environment and Conservation; Department of Natural Resources; and NSW Health and any other regulatory agencies that it may consider appropriate (e.g., the Department of Local Government) to promote greater coordination of regulatory effort, streamline regulatory processes (including use of common definitions and reporting frequencies across regulatory agencies), and identify and remove unnecessary reporting requirements. In particular, this group should consider whether existing information requested by regulatory agencies is necessary, meaningful and justifiable on the basis of net benefit to the community.

RECOMMENDATION 72

That the Government ensure that new regulatory requirements for water utilities (such as performance indicators and standards, mandatory guidelines, codes of practice and other reporting requirements) are subject to proportionate cost-benefit analysis, as well as stakeholder consultation.

RECOMMENDATION 73

That the Government consider reviewing the efficiency of current regulatory arrangements for water and whether improvements can be made to ensure greater integration and coordination amongst regulators to achieve social and environmental objectives.

NSW Government Response (71-73):

The NSW Government supports these recommendations in-principle, and believes that there would be value in reviewing the efficiency of current regulatory arrangements for water. The NSW Government will ask the Natural Resources and Environment CEO Cluster, an existing interagency working group of senior officers, to oversee a review process that will examine the issues outlined in recommendations 71-73.

The NSW Government supports the recommendations of both of these reviews and is working on implementing them.

6. Sustainability Policy for NSW Government Agencies

As a result of the Red Tape reviews outlined above, the NSW Government has recognised the need to simplify and streamline environmental reporting from Government Agencies. There is also a need to agree on greenhouse targets to replace GEMP and to package all the work government agencies are undertaking on sustainable operations into one coherent policy.

The Government is finalising a policy which will outline how the NSW Government will lead by example in sustainable water and energy use, and waste and fleet management.

The Government has already made public commitments to the sustainable water use of its operations. The Metropolitan Water Plan 2006 highlighted that the Government would lead by example in water efficiency. The NSW Greenhouse Plan, released in November 2005, committed to reducing water use by Government in the order of 15%.

Although water use by NSW Government accounts for only 0.4% of water used in the State, the Government will demonstrate leadership by reducing its potable water consumption through improving the water efficiency performance of its buildings and infrastructure and its irrigation practices.

The public sector must also play a key role in NSW's response to climate change. Improving public sector energy efficiency demonstrates the government's commitment to emissions reduction, manages government energy costs and provides a model for community action.

This proposed sustainability policy will also incorporate the ongoing implementation of the successful Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) and the Cleaner Government Fleet Policy.

This proposed initiative will:

- reduce water and energy consumption
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- reduce waste and increase recycling in Government activities
- reduce the impacts of the Government vehicle fleet.

In implementing the proposed policy, the NSW Government will seek to:

- lead by example to reduce its own impact and to help drive markets for new practices
- measure and report on its performance
- deliver outcomes in a cost effective way.

Annual reporting under the proposed policy will be streamlined and integrated through OSCAR (Online System for Comprehensive Activity Reporting), a web-based reporting tool.

In line with the outcomes of the internal Government Red Tape Review, reporting on office buildings will be streamlined through an aggregated report by DECC based on water and energy contracts etc. This means that the 70% of agencies which predominantly occupy office buildings will not be required to report separately. These agencies will be encouraged to report in their annual reports.

The proposed policy will be considered by the Sustainability in Government Chief Executive Officers Group.

7. Carbon Emissions Reporting

Many agencies are beginning to explore how to limit their carbon footprint. This is a very complex process which generally results in long term action plans.

In July 2007 Sydney Water announced its plans to become carbon neutral by 2020. The first milestone for Sydney Water is to cut emissions by 60% by 2012.

Sydney Water's priority will be reducing its energy demand, using energy more efficiently, generating renewable energy and using carbon credits.

DECC has also been working on the management of carbon emissions from DECC's operations.

The first step was the development of an initial inventory of DECC's carbon emissions based on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard, which provides internationally recognised guidance on what emission sources to include and how to quantify them.

A ten point action plan has also been developed to address DECC's carbon management in the short, medium and long term.

DECC's experience in undertaking this work will be used to provide assistance to other Government agencies who wish to reduce their carbon footprint.

8. Concluding Comments

At this stage, the NSW General Government sector has a multitude of instruments and mechanisms for reporting environmental impacts.

We are seeking to consolidate and streamline existing reporting requirements.

In so far as the Government businesses are concerned, it is important that they retain the flexibility to adopt reporting practices that are most suited to their own industry circumstances.

ATTACHMENT A

Examples of Current NSW Public Sector Environmental Impact Reporting

Policy	Reporting Requirement
1) Individual agency activities	
A) Integrated	
Results and Services Plans (RSPs)	High level business plans that help agencies to demonstrate the relationship between the services they deliver and the results that they are working towards.
B) Environmental	
Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP)	Agencies report key information in their Annual Reports, including their goals for the next year and also report more broadly to the Department of Environment and Climate Change.
Learning for Sustainability - NSW Environment Education Plan 2007-2010	State Government agencies are required to report annually to the Council on Environmental Education on their contributions to implementing the Plan.
Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP)	All WRAPP agencies are required to report progress in implementing their WRAPP plans periodically. Currently agencies must report every two years, including updating the schedules to their reports. Refer to Premier's Memorandum 97-20 and Memorandum 99-19. Agencies with fewer than 200 staff are only required to report on WRAPP every three years in their Annual Report only.
2) Wider Reports on a Single Area	
Government Energy Management Policy (GEMP) <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i>	Government-wide goals are set and a sector-wide public report is prepared annually by the Department of Environment and Climate Change.
Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy (WRAPP) <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i>	The Department of Environment and Climate Change is required to report on the achievements and progress in the State of the Environment Report. They are also required to report to Government on the value and performance of the WRAPP policy.
State of the Environment (SoE) Report <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i>	Triennial report on the status of the main environmental issues in NSW. SoE 2006 is structured around six major themes: Toward Environmental Sustainability, Human Settlement, Atmosphere, Land, Water and Biodiversity.

<p>State of the Beaches Report <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i></p>	<p>Annual report of water quality monitoring at recreational swimming locations around Sydney.</p>
<p>State of the Parks Report <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i></p>	<p>Provides a snapshot of conservation values in key parks and reserves from across New South Wales.</p>
<p>Air Quality Reporting <i>Department of Environment and Climate Change</i></p>	<p>Monitoring of air quality to assess compliance with the National Environment Protection Measure for Ambient Air Quality (AAQ). Annual Reports are prepared summarising the monitoring results and comparing these results to the AAQ NEPM goals. The latest report was the New South Wales Annual Compliance Report which was prepared in July 2006.</p> <p>DECC produces daily and quarterly air quality monitoring reports.</p>
<p>3) Other (contributions to national/international reports)</p>	
<p>State of the Environment Report (Australia) <i>Department of Environment and Heritage (Cth)</i></p>	<p>The <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cwth) 1999</i> requires a report to be prepared every five years. The national SoE Reports provide information about environmental and heritage conditions, trends and pressures for the Australian continent, surrounding seas and Australia's external territories. The third State of the Environment report was produced in 2006, and was prepared by the independent 2006 Australian State of the Environment Committee.</p>
<p>Montréal Process Reports Co-ordinated at the Commonwealth level by the <i>Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA)</i> with contribution from <i>Forests NSW</i>.</p>	<p>Australia uses the international Montréal Process criteria and indicators as the basis of a framework of regional criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. In 2005, 67 indicators were streamlined into 44. The framework provides a guideline for monitoring forest management in all forest areas, including Regional Forest Agreements. "</p>

**Examples of Sustainability Reports
Produced by Government Businesses**

These Government businesses operate under a different management framework to those agencies providing core Government services, funded through the Budget process.

Government businesses operate within the *Commercial Policy Framework*, which is a suite of policies aimed at replicating within Government businesses the disciplines and incentives that lead private sector businesses towards efficient commercial practices. A fundamental objective is to maximise the return to shareholders – namely, the people of NSW.

Having said this, Government businesses also need to ensure that the social and environment factors are addressed - to ensure that the business is sustainable in the long term and to demonstrate good corporate citizenship. Under the *State-Owned Corporations Act 1989*, Government corporations have a statutory obligation to, *inter alia*, exhibit a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the community in which it operates, and where its activities affect the environment, to conduct its operations in compliance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.¹

Government businesses can also have a range of industry specific reporting obligations. For example, Forests NSW has a responsibility to report under the Montreal Process on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests (international agreement), the Regional Forests Agreement, the *State of the Environment Report* and the *State of the Forests Report*.

Department	Report
Waste Service NSW	2003/04 Annual Report – included an “in accordance report” complying with GRI Guidelines and independently verified under the AA1000 Assurance Standard. Incorporated sustainability indicators in their 2004-05 Annual Report. For the past two years WSN have calculated the ecological footprint of a full year’s operations, and reported on it in their Annual Report.
Hunter Water Corporation	Operating licence requires it to report annually against a series of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) indicators. Produced a Community and Environment Report which from 2003-04 has been incorporated into the Annual Report to provide a single triple bottom line annual report.
Sydney Water	Operating licence requires it to report annually against a series of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) indicators. Produced an annual Environment Report and a 5 year Environment Plan. Now produce “Towards Sustainability” covering environmental, social and economic evaluations.

¹ Refer to the principal objectives of statutory SOCs, section 20E of the *State-Owned Corporations Act 1989*.

	<p>This is now combined with the Annual Report to provide a single triple bottom line annual report. Verified against the AA1000 Assurance Standard and the Global Reporting Initiative's 2002 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.</p> <p>Sydney Water's latest Annual Report was produced in 2006.</p>
Sydney Ports Corporation	<p>Produced an inaugural Environmental Report in 2002-03 and reports on environmental indicators in its Annual Report, the latest of which was produced in 2006.</p>
Forests NSW (part of the Department of Primary Industries)	<p>Produces "The Seeing Report" covering social, environmental and economic dimensions. This sustainability report was produced most recently in 2005-06, and is now in its ninth year of production.</p>
Landcom	<p><i>Landcom Corporation Act 2001</i> includes requirements for environmental sustainability reporting. Landcom's Annual Corporate Plans have included triple bottom line (TBL) reporting requirements since 2000.</p> <p>Landcom produced sustainability reports from 2002 until 2005. In 2006 they incorporated their sustainability reporting in their Annual Report. They report against a range of environmental indicators in their Annual Report.</p>
Integral Energy	<p>The 2002-03 Annual Performance Report has integrated the previously separate sustainability report and annual report. The report is based on Global Reporting Initiative Guidelines and is broken down into economic, environmental and social performance.</p> <p>In 2005-06 Integral Energy reported against 'Key environmental challenges' and against sustainability indicators guided by the GRI.</p>

ACRONYMS

AAQ - Ambient Air Quality
ABGR - Australian Building Greenhouse Rating Scheme
AFFA - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia
AGD – Attorney General’s Department
BASIX – Building Sustainability Index
CANRI – Community Access to Natural Resources Information
CEO - Chief Executive Officer
CMA - Catchment Management Authority
CO^{2-e} - Carbon Dioxide Equivalent
DEC – Department of Environment and Conservation
DECC – Department of Environment and Climate Change (formerly Department of Environment and Conservation)
DET – Department of Education and Training
DEUS – Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability (now part of DECC)
DLG – Department of Local Government
DNR – Department of Natural Resources
DPI - Department of Primary Industries
DWE - Department of Water and Energy
EDGAR - Environmental Data Gathering and Reporting
EPA – Environment Protection Authority
ESD – Ecologically Sustainable Development
GEMP - Government Energy Management Policy
GRI - Global Reporting Initiative
IPART - Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
MER – Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
NAP - National Action Plan
NEPM - National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM)
NHT - Natural Heritage Trust
NPI - National Pollutant Inventory
NRM - Natural resource management
NSW – New South Wales
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCAR – Online System for Comprehensive Activity Reporting
RSP – Results and Services Plans
SEMP - School Environment Management Plan
SOC - State-Owned Corporations
SoE – State of the Environment Report
TBL - Triple bottom line
WRAPP - Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy