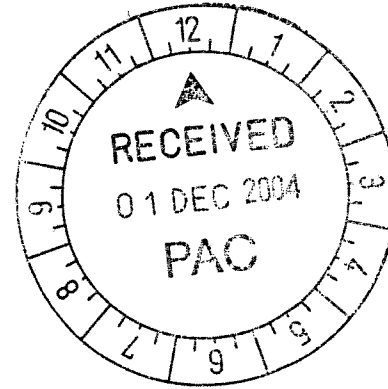


Our Ref: 4100/63  
Contact: Louise Petchell  
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28 October 2004

Legislative Assembly  
Public Accounts Committee  
New South Wales

Dear Sir/Madam

**Inquiry into Sustainability Reporting in the New South Wales Public Sector**

Thank you for the opportunity for Penrith City Council to provide comment on the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into Sustainability Reporting in the NSW Public Sector.

We welcome the inquiry into Sustainability Reporting in the New South Wales Public Sector, as Penrith City Council is currently in the process of identifying a suitable approach to monitoring and reporting, including the development of sustainability indicators and performance measures.

As a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Sustainability Reporting Alliance, Penrith City Council encourages the Committee to engage with organisations currently undertaking programs with similar terms of reference to those of this Public Inquiry.

The Sustainability Reporting Alliance is aimed at assisting Australian and New Zealand councils define and achieve their sustainability objectives. The Triple Bottom Line approach has been adopted by the Alliance as a framework for delivering sustainability through reporting, strategic planning, and operational decision-making.

The Alliance provides an opportunity for organisations interested in progressing in one of these areas to drive the agenda and work together to achieve significant outcomes, and is working to accelerate learning and implementation in leadership organisations, providing a further increase in implementation across the public sector.

The Sustainability Reporting Alliance was proposed due to significant interest expressed by Australian and New Zealand local governments. It also provided the opportunity to parallel the Global Reporting Initiative Public Agency Sector Supplement process, enabling the public sector agencies from Australia and New Zealand participating in the Sustainability Reporting Alliance to follow closely the development of the GRI Public Agency Sector Supplement, and work of the GRI Public Agency Sector Supplement working group.

Upon release of the Public Sector Supplement, ICLEI-A/NZ will work together with the Alliance group to provide the opportunity for members to be amongst the first public agencies world-wide to road test the supplement.

Penrith City Council endorses the approach outlined in the Terms of Reference to consider sustainability reporting initiatives in international jurisdictions. A recent study tour undertaken by Council's Local Planning Manager, Ruth Goldsmith and Sustainability Unit Coordinator, Louise Petchell, focused on a range of destinations within England (UK) and Canada, visiting councils who are 'mainstreaming' sustainability within their organisations and the community. The study tour also provided the opportunity to participate in the fourth European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns 'Inspiring Futures' held in Aalborg, Denmark.

A consistent message from many UK councils was that to successfully integrate the principles of sustainability into an organisation's decision-making, systems and operations, specific sustainability requirements need to be clearly mandated, and regularly audited. An external audit process seems to have more effect.

An approach called 'Best Value', required by the national government, is the way that local councils in the UK measure, manage and improve performance. It is an approach that has also recently been adopted across Victoria. 'Best Value' can apply to a service, a department or a whole council, but is most effective when applied holistically and used to drive improvement.

Visits to Bristol City Council, Coventry City Council, London Borough of Enfield, Oldham City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council produced some useful information on the 'Best Value' review process as a valuable point of reference for integrating sustainability as a corporate planning tool.

More generally with regards to sustainability performance and monitoring, many of the local UK and Canadian authorities had a strong focus on the development of processes to evaluate performance against relevant indicators. This is particularly relevant to Penrith City Council's Strategic and Management Plan processes, in reviewing achievement of the organisation's goals, and reporting those outcomes to our communities.

Bristol City Council and Hamilton City Council have developed Sustainability Indicators against which to measure their performance. Hamilton Council uses the Indicators, in a Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Report, as a management tool. Councils used a range of measures to report on their performance, including the Annual Corporate Report, separate Sustainability Performance reports, reporting through their Management Plan equivalents (eg Best Value), and through a Community Report (recently legislated in the UK).

The introduction of an Environmental Management System (EMS / EMAS) was considered by four councils (Bristol City Council, Kirklees Metropolitan Council, Leicester County Council, and Toronto City Council) to be a fundamental element in mainstreaming sustainability in their organisations. The EMS provided these Councils with the framework against which they could measure their performance, audit their processes, and report their achievements. The EMS also integrates sustainability within the organisation's decision-making processes. An Environmental Management System focuses on delivering practical outcomes. As such, it can introduce a system that enables the effective translation of high level strategies into practical actions and effective implementation.

The information provided in this submission to the Inquiry into Sustainability Reporting in the New South Wales Public Sector is so that you might be able to build upon your network of sustainability professionals in local government, and hopefully find useful directions and programs that can be reflected report.

Should you require any additional information please contact Louise Petchell, Sustainability Unit Coordinator on (02) 4732 7703 or by email: [lpetchell@penrithcity.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lpetchell@penrithcity.nsw.gov.au). In addition, should you wish to contact ICLEI regarding the Sustainability Reporting Alliance, I encourage you to contact Mr Wayne Wescott, Chief Executive Officer, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives -Australia and New Zealand, Level 4, 267 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000, on (03) 9660 2220.

Yours sincerely



Louise Petchell  
Sustainability Unit Coordinator  
Penrith City Council