

Tasmanian Positive Sustainability Strategy

Submission - Waratah-Wynyard Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Panel

This submission for the Tasmanian Positive Sustainability Strategy is from the Waratah-Wynyard Sustainability and Environmental Advisory Panel (SEAP), which is a collaborative partnership between the Waratah-Wynyard Council and the Waratah-Wynyard community to inform and advise Council on environmental matters. The first and more important recommendation we wish to make with regards to the Tasmanian Sustainability Strategy is that other Tasmanian Councils follow the lead of the Waratah-Wynyard Council in establishing a SEAP, or version thereof in all Tasmanian Councils.

We believe the key to a sustainable future is cooperation, both within communities and between communities, all levels of government, and business. We believe the SEAP is an exemplar of cooperation, and embodies the synergies of action on environmental projects, as well as the immense social benefits of building cooperative and community capacity. A major aspect crucial to the success of SEAP in advancing sustainability is that it is based on dialogue. As has been stated in the sustainability literature, 'It is through dialogue that we grow sensitive to multiple realities and learn to negotiate across diverse relationships and realities. Fostering an ongoing dialogic culture promotes transformative action. A dialogic culture supports attending to what we take for granted, noticing what others notice that would be otherwise invisible to us, and opening pathways exploring new opportunities and possibilities'. We believe this dialogue that is inherent to the way the SEAP functions is crucial to underpin effective action towards sustainability.

Three of the main objectives of the SEAP are to represent a range of sectors and opinions relating to or impacting the natural environment, including community, agency, industry etc; provide input and advice to Council on issues of environmental sustainability; and actively support Council's consultation with and advocacy to the broader community. The SEAP particularly advises on the implementation, monitoring and review of the Integrated Council Environmental Plan (iCEP) 2020-2030. This plan explicitly acknowledges that we are facing unprecedented challenges as global climate change has ever greater negative impacts on ecosystems and communities. It is a ten-year, evidence-based plan reflective of current research and technical insight. It sets out key priorities across five areas of council and community life: council-led sustainability; community adaptation and resilience; future-ready infrastructure; financial and economic sustainability; and environmental stewardship

The ICEP plan identifies the importance of resilience, one definition of which is the ability of people, communities, societies or systems to live and develop with change—incremental and abrupt, expected and surprising—and with ever-changing environments. It is not limited to the ability to absorb or adapt to change but also includes the ability to transform with change—to create a fundamentally new system. Resilience highlights it is people who need to have the capacity to live and develop with change, reflecting the basic truism that since it is human actions that are the main driving force of global environmental change, behavioural change is both one of the biggest challenges to, and opportunities for sustainable communities. It follows that the local level is the most effective scale for achieving behaviour change, when considering that behaviour change is only ultimately possible in the context of supportive communities and positive environments. Local government and community partnerships are crucial for achieving these positive changes.

The SEAP hence has great potential for helping to progress the positive environments needed for the behaviour change required for sustainability. An example of this potential is the SEAP working groups. An objective of the SEAP is to establish working groups on an as required basis. So far this has been a significant achievement in that a number working groups have been established, which allow a focus on a particular issue related to sustainability and the environment. One example is the Community Food Security working group. We believe food security is an important part of sustainability strategies, due to three reasons. Firstly it is a basic human need. There are many specialists who warn that the world is facing a severe shortage of food, particularly owing to the impacts of climate change. Even in Tasmania, recent figures range from 11% to over 50% experiencing food insecurity. Secondly food production has a relatively large ecological footprint,

however there are production methods such as regenerative agriculture which tend to have a lower footprint, and are also better for human health including to the extent they involve less chemical use. Thirdly Community Food Security projects have the triple benefit of providing food locally, with a generally lower footprint, and they can increase human health directly including to the extent they satisfy basic needs of social interaction.

Our second recommendation is that placing priority on wellbeing is a vital pillar of sustainability. We are pleased that the Tasmanian Government is developing a Wellbeing strategy, and believe implementing the strategy will be vital for sustainability in Tasmania. We advocate for the definition of wellbeing as 'A state of existence that fulfils various human needs, including material living conditions and quality of life, as well as the ability to pursue one's own goals, to thrive, and feel satisfied with one's life. Ecosystem wellbeing refers to the ability of ecosystems to maintain their diversity and quality'. (IPCC). It is via local action that wellbeing can best be achieved in the short term, while waiting for State and Federal Governments to develop and implement policies that enhance the broader and more structural determinants of wellbeing.

Hence in answer to the question of 'What are the most important challenges we need to overcome to achieve your vision for Tasmania in 2050?', we think barriers to working cooperatively is one of the most important challenges to overcome, but initiatives like the Waratah-Wynyard SEAP are an exemplary way of helping to address this challenge.