



The Sustainable Communities Initiative is a multi-stakeholder partnership developing and delivering innovative solutions enabling Australian communities to realise sustainable social, economic and environmental vitality.

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Director's Note

In mid 2006, fourteen organisations from business, government, research and civil society sectors committed to work together in the Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) over a three year period (2006–2009). Over the past month or so, the SCI team has been drafting a report, *Working Together~Learning Together II*, detailing the SCI's activities and achievements of the past two years, drawing reflections on our shared experiences, and identifying issues for future focus.



Sean Rooney

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SCI Achievements

Upon reflection on the SCI's activities over the past two years, a number of significant achievements have been accomplished. These achievements are evidenced through the SCI's learning and evaluation activities, feedback from SCI stakeholders, and recognition from key sustainable development and cross-sector partnership thought and practice leaders. SCI achievements include:

- **Proof of Concept:** The SCI has successfully transitioned from an innovative concept into a fully functioning, cross-sector partnership with national reach. The SCI project portfolio includes six projects in full operation, five projects set to commence, and a further four projects under development. The estimated total value of SCI operations is approximately \$4million. The SCI membership of 15 organisations from across the public, private, civil society and research sectors is vibrant, engaged and effective at both program and project scales.
- **Influencing Programs and Practice:** In addition to project level effectiveness and impact, the SCI has demonstrated its ability to influence programs and practice including:
 - Shaping the ACT Planning & Land Authority's approaches to future urban development in the ACT via the SCI's East Lake urban renewal project
 - Influencing the creation of a new program by Regional Development Victoria (RDV) to support five SCI projects in regional Victorian communities, based on RDV's experiences as a project partner in the Maine's Power project in Castlemaine
 - Assisting local stakeholders via the SCI's Surat Basin Sustainable Futures Scoping Study in Queensland to identify key issues and shape community and regional scale responses to the potential impacts of energy resources led development in the Surat Basin.
- **Thought and Practice Leadership:** By sharing insights and learnings from our activities and experiences, the SCI has been acknowledged as an emerging thought and practice leader in the domain of cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development. For example, the SCI was invited by the Garnaut Climate Change Review to produce a case study on the Maine's Power project in Castlemaine, as an example of good practice in collaborative action to reduce GHG emissions.
- **Sharing Valuable Insights:** Through the SCI's project experiences, insights are emerging that are valued by a diverse range of constituents. The SCI's communication activities have enabled the SCI to share insights from our experiences with key stakeholders and, in doing so, has further enhanced the SCI's credibility and profile. Some examples include a number of articles in ECOS magazine (Australia's leading magazine on sustainability in the environment, industry and community) on the SCI and individual SCI projects.
- **Demonstrating Innovation:** A key underpinning principle of the SCI is that of innovation - seeking to do better through collaborative learning and experimentation - rather than simply replicating existing approaches to addressing local

sustainability issues. The SCI is an acknowledged innovator in terms of the cross sector partnering processes; the nature of SCI projects; embedding action learning in the partnering process; and technological innovation emerging from some SCI projects.

- **Catalyst for Action:** Each SCI project catalyses action amongst project participants and within communities. In addition to project related action and activities, evidence is emerging of complementary activities and opportunities, beyond the scope of SCI projects, that appear as by-products of engagement in the SCI.

SCI issues and insights

When reflecting on the SCI's achievements and experiences, there emerges a set of observations and issues – 'insights' – for wider and deeper consideration. These insights suggest future areas of need and focus for both the SCI and the practice of cross-sector partnering approaches to sustainable development in Australian communities. These include:

- Building individual and institutional competency and capacity for collaboration
- Identifying and supporting the development of partnership brokers and developing tools/processes to support the brokering function.
- Reconsidering our traditional problem-solving approaches and exploring alternative models for solution seeking that shift the focus from 'symptoms' to 'systems'
- Assisting individuals and groups to balance their focus between being 'advocates' for a position (or a solution) and being active 'inquirers' into the most appropriate response/solution
- Considering collaborative approaches to 'option development' as a necessary process resulting in better informed investment decisions and more effective 'solution implementation'
- Exploring how the cross-sector partnership model can be adapted to different contexts, and how these contexts might influence the nature of the partnering process
- Creating broader understanding of the challenges, opportunities and constraints inherent within the partnering model and how this relates to the ways in which policy and programs are conceived and delivered
- Understanding the role of 'action learning' in partnerships as an approach to assist individuals and organisations deal with the uncertainty, complexity and risk inherent in complex challenges and opportunities.

The SCI is committed to further exploring these issues/insights in the year ahead and will build on the foundations laid over the past two years as it continues to develop and deliver projects in partnership with communities.

Finally, of special note for SCI stakeholders are three upcoming major events.

Sustainable Building 2008 International Conference

The World Sustainable Building (SB) Conference series, which has been held every three years, is the peak gathering of the world's leading technical experts and researchers on sustainable built environments. The building sector needs a new wave of innovation to drive dramatic reductions in environmental impacts while sustaining economic growth and improving social outcomes. SB08 is re-establishing links between researchers, industry and government to make this happen.

Sustainable Futures for Business and Society

Annual conference of the Asia Pacific Academy of Business in Society to be held at INSEAD in Singapore from 16-18 October.

Business for Millennium Development (B4MD)

B4MD is a new Australian organisation providing a leadership forum to drive economic development in the emerging markets of the Asia Pacific in ways that contribute to poverty alleviation. B4MD supports Australian business to operate, innovate and grow in true partnership with the communities in which they operate. To deliver on this agenda B4MD is hosting a summit in October that will bring together some of the world's leading thinkers and captains of industry to challenge current business models and practices, and how Australian businesses can create new opportunities by aligning themselves with the MDGs.

Regards

Sean Rooney, Director of SCI

SCI announces program to work with five communities in Regional Victoria.

Regional Development Victoria and the SCI have agreed to work together on program that will see the SCI partner with five communities in regional Victoria.

The partnership projects will assist five communities, one in each region of Victoria, to find a common vision for their sustainable future development. In each community, the project will bring together representatives from business, government and the community.

The projects will to assist communities to plan for sustainability in the following way:

Analyse current situation and directions

The projects will work with communities to examine the current sustainability issues facing their region. This will involve examining current challenges and development issues and realistic options for change.

Assist communities to define a shared vision for the future of their region

The projects will support the community in defining how they want their region's future to look. By facilitating discussion among different groups about what the future should look like, the projects will explore strategies for the future that are meaningful and reflect community values and priorities - and as a result, are more likely to be successful.

Develop different scenarios or pathways for development

Considering both the community vision for the region, and the analysis of development constraints, the projects will work with communities, government and the private sector to develop scenarios and alternative pathways for future development.

At the conclusion of each project the key outcomes delivered to the communities will be:

- Strong relationships amongst key stakeholders as the foundation for local action
- Shared understanding of local conditions, issues and future options regarding sustainability
- An agreed pathway for action in response to local sustainability issue/s suitable for resourcing and implementation.

For further information regarding this program of activity please contact:

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Project Update

Scoping study - Surat Basin sustainable futures

Location: Surat Basin – Queensland

Objective:

Through a scoping study assess the potential impacts of energy resource development in the Surat Basin region from a community perspective and identify viable options for intervention to mitigate potentially undesirable outcomes.

Timeframe: December 2007 to July 2008

Update:

Communities in the Surat Basin in Southern Queensland are facing significant change

driven by resources led regional development. This change brings challenges and opportunities. In particular, lessons can be learnt from other regions that have under gone similar changes. The likely scale and scope of the change suggests that both individual community responses and a coordinated regional response are warranted in order to enhance the potential benefits to local communities, and mitigate possible negative social impacts, of resources led development in the region.

In order to better understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the communities in the region a scoping study was undertaken to:

1. Gain a systems understanding of the drivers and impacts of change in the region at various scales;
2. Identify areas of vulnerability, opportunity and priority for communities and the region; and
3. Suggest options in response to identified vulnerabilities and priorities



Focus groups were held in Surat Basin communities.

This scoping study project commenced in late 2007 and included community consultation, mapping of existing groups and activities, clarification of issues and the provision of some possible responses to strengthen the sustainability of the communities in the Surat Basin region.

The project was completed recently and the outputs were shared with communities in the region. It is anticipated that this report will help focus a regional scale strategy for development in the Surat Basin. The full report can be downloaded from the CSIRO website.

New SCI Member

The SCI welcomes its newest member – the St James Ethics Centre.



Rosemary Sainty, the Centre's Head of Responsible Business Practice and CR Leaders Project in Australia, recently announced, "The St James Ethics Centre is delighted to join the SCI as an Associate Member and looks forward to collaborating with the program, in particular, assisting businesses of all sizes to engage in responsible business practise in their communities".

Aligned to the SCI's focus and intent, the Australian Government is funding the St James Ethics Centre to undertake a three year project to expand responsible business practice nationally, as announced by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd at the 9th National Business Leaders Forum on Sustainable Development in May this year.

Contributing to the SCI is an exciting opportunity for St James Ethics Centre, which is uniquely placed within Australia through its high levels of trust within the Australian Business Community and within the general Australian community, which understands that the Centre's initiatives are based on developing the common good. The Centre has strong international links with key players in corporate responsibility and sustainability (such as Business in the Community, and the UN Global Compact) and is keen to assist Australian business to 'punch above its weight' when it comes to responsible business practice.

The Centre believes many businesses engage in 'silent CSR' - contributing in many different ways to their local communities and working at ways to 'do the right thing' with regards to their environmental impacts in energy, water and waste, as well as responsible workplace and marketing practices. The Centre's aim is to assist business to be strategic in this - to help assess, measure, monitor and report from their core business operations to their customers on the part they are playing in building sustainable, resilient communities.

Additionally, smaller and locally based businesses traditionally have greater levels of trust, connectedness and responsiveness to their communities in Australia and it is likely that they currently underestimate their collective power. The Centre is keen to see these organisations having a voice in the CSR conversation, and an opportunity to lead. The Centre looks forward to working more closely with all of SCI's participants. Learn more about the St James Ethics Centre

Useful Links

Partnerships for sustainable development

AccountAbility's ground-breaking report: [Governing Collaboration: Making Partnerships Accountable for Delivering Development](#)

Climate change

Government and climate change

Emissions: who is trading what?

Several emission trading schemes are already in operation in different regions and countries, and others at the planning stage. This background note provides the reader with a brief overview of emissions trading, the types of trading schemes and an examination of existing and proposed schemes.

Government Funds 'Climate Ready' Companies

The Rudd Government's \$75 million Climate Ready program is open for applications from Australian business.

Potential impacts and costs of climate change fact sheets

Fact sheets on the potential impacts and costs of climate change for Australia and each state and territory have been published by the Department of Climate Change. The fact sheets cover natural disasters, drought, water resources, electricity production, agricultural production, human health, infrastructure, coastal zones, and flora and fauna.

Carbon pollution reduction scheme green paper

Department of Climate Change, Australian Government

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper canvasses options and preferred approaches on issues, such as which industry sectors will be covered and how emission caps will be set. It also includes ways to address the impacts on Australian households, emissions-intensive trade-exposed industries and other strongly affected sectors.

Cost-benefit analysis of climate change: Stern revisited

Paul Baer and Clive L. Spash / CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

This paper explores the challenges facing orthodox economic approaches to assessing climate control as if it were

appraisal of an investment project. Serious flaws are noted in the work of economists with especial attention to the UK Government report by Stern and colleagues.

Business & climate change

Adaptation: An issue brief for business

This report from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) offers an overview of climate change adaptation from a business perspective, reviewing the potential impacts, risks, opportunities and business case for adaptation planning and measures.

'Together' we can fight climate change

Major companies, including Origin Energy, Westpac, GE, Man Investments and Ten have joined Together (), a consumer engagement campaign on climate change, designed to promote simple products, services and initiatives that result in measurable carbon dioxide (CO₂) savings.

Ecological Sustainability: The Dominant Corporate Communications Issue of the Decade

This white paper from Bite Communications studies in great depth the communications challenges and opportunities that corporations face from global climate change.

Growing the green collar economy: Skills and labour challenges in reducing our greenhouse emissions and national environmental footprint.

Dusseldorp Skills Forum / CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

This report explores the skills, innovation and employment dimensions of the transition to a more environmentally sustainable society, with a particular focus on the challenges involved in achieving deep cuts in greenhouse emissions.

Society & climate change

What Assures Consumers on Climate Change?

Preliminary results from an Australian survey have found that more than 81 per cent of consumers agree that everyone needs to take more responsibility for their personal contribution to global warming but they are not sure that business or government can be trusted to provide the right information.

Australian action on climate change: Guide for Garnaut and the Government

Make Poverty History

This publication and its national campaign aims to broaden the climate change debate to include development and poverty perspectives as well as domestic issues.

An assessment of the impact of climate change on the nature and frequency of exceptional climatic events

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO

The Australian Government commissioned the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO to undertake a climatic assessment of the likely future climate patterns and the current Exceptional Circumstances standard of a one-in-20-to-25-year-event.

Energy affordability, living standards and emissions trading: Assessing the social impacts of achieving deep cuts in Australian greenhouse emissions

Steve Hatfield-Dodds and Richard Denniss / CSIRO and The Climate Institute

Emission trading will begin in Australia from 2010. While the design features of the scheme are yet to be finalised, whatever scheme is introduced will lead to higher energy prices. This paper assesses the likely impact of higher energy prices on a range of different household types over time.

Climate risk and industry adaptation-Murray Darling Basin

Marry Milne, Nyree Stenekes and Jacqui Russell / Australian Government Bureau of Rural Sciences

This report provides findings from four case studies in the Murray-Darling Basin that explored the links between people's climate risk management strategies and their perceptions of climate variability and climate change.

Shifting towards sustainability: Education for climate change adaptation

Anna Lyth, Sandra Nichols and Daniella Tilbury / Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability

This document reports on a scoping study which investigated the professional training and development needs of architects, landscape architects, planners and engineers in climate change adaptation through engaging relevant accrediting institutions in an action inquiry process.

Technology & climate change

Helping unleash international clean technology investment

The Climate Institute

With much of the investment in clean technology needed in the Asia-Pacific region, Australia is well positioned to play a leadership role and also benefit from the already emerging global clean technology economy.

CSIRO breakthrough: a milestone for low emissions coal technology

In a first for Australia, carbon dioxide (CO₂) has been captured from power station flue gases in a post-combustion-capture (PCC) pilot plant at Loy Yang Power Station in Victoria's Latrobe Valley.

Corporate responsibility

Social Compact and Corporate Philanthropy

A new report by the Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy (CECP) in the US focuses on the role philanthropy can play in fulfilling a company's contract with society.

Deloitte paper – the risk intelligent approach to corporate responsibility and sustainability

The Role of the Private Sector in Expanding Economic Opportunity through Collaborative Action. Report of a Leadership Dialogue, Oct. 18 & 19, 2007

CSR and Public Policy: New Forms of Engagement between Business and Government

A New Approach to Capitalism in the 21st Century

By Bill Gates

IBLF - The Role of Business in Society: An Agenda for Action

Wal-Mart: From Evil Empire to jolly green giant

Built Environment

Unsettling suburbia: The new landscape of oil and mortgage vulnerability in Australian cities

Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe / Urban Research Program, Griffith University

This paper graphically describes the devastating impact of soaring fuel and mortgage prices on Australian households. The VAMPIRE index identifies the relative degree of socio-economic stress in suburbs in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

Climate change law for planners, developers, local government and greenies: a quick stock take and some ideas for the future

Philippa England / Urban Research Centre, Griffith University

This paper describes some of the main achievements to date by Australian institutions in addressing climate change and proposes a principled framework through which these and other relevant ideas, initiatives, policies and measures may be organised and rationalised.

Sea level rise decision could have implications for all coastal councils

A decision by Victoria's Civil and Administrative Tribunal to overturn South Gippsland Shire Council's approval of the development of six coastal homes due to the potential impact of rising sea levels could have ramifications for coastal councils across Australia. The tribunal's decision sends a strong message to Victorian coastal councils that the predicted impacts of climate change should be taken into account when considering development applications in coastal zones.

Other areas of interest

Promoting better environmental outcomes

Productivity Commission

This roundtable looked at the effectiveness of current approaches to environmental issues; the strengths and limitations of market-based and cooperative solutions; and institutions and incentives for better policies and outcomes.

How transformational leadership can work

New columnist for Ethical Corporation, Andy Savitz, considers what it takes in a leader to really change a company for the better.

Australia under construction: nation-building past, present and future

John Butcher (ed) / ANU E Press

From its beginnings as a settler society through to present day concerns about 'broadbanding the nation', the nation-building narrative has resonated with Australians. The eleven authors contributing to this monograph reflect on its contemporary relevance as a framework for public policy.

Promoting sustainable consumption: good practices in OECD countries

As a contribution to the UN Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production, the OECD identified effective government approaches for using various tools (regulations, taxes, labelling, education) to promote the sustainability of consumption in economic, environmental and social terms.

Events

Sustainable Building 2008 international conference

The World Sustainable Building (SB) Conference series, which has been held every three years, is the peak gathering of the world's leading technical experts and researchers on sustainable built environments.

Asia Pacific Academy of Business in Society

Annual conference of the Asia Pacific Academy of Business in Society to be held at INSEAD, Asia Campus in Singapore from 16-18 October, 2008. Note: Earlybird registration available until September 7, 2008.

Business for Millennium Development Summit '08

Friday 24 October 2008, Park Hyatt Melbourne.

SCI Members

The following fifteen organisations are committed to working together to support sustainable communities in Australia through the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

Foundation Members:



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Associate Members:



**The Natural Edge
PROJECT**



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local Government**



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



Australian Government

Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research



Contact Us

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