

# ENVIRONMENT AUSTRALIA

## AUSTRALIAN LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

### AN ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION MATRIX

#### VOLUME 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART 1: KEY LOCAL AGENDA 21 DOCUMENTS</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 Agenda 21	2
1.2 Local Agenda 21	3
1.3 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development	5
1.4 Managing for the future : a local government guide	8
1.5 Local Action: A Training Guide	10
1.6 The Newcastle Declaration	10
1.7 Our Community: Our Future	11
1.8 Local Agenda 21 The South Australian Experience	12
1.9 Milestone approach discussion paper	14
1.10 Summary of Part 1	15
<b>PART 2: OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENTS</b>	<b>17</b>
2.2 Integrated Local Area Planning	20
2.3 ESD and public participation in Local Government legislation	22
2.4 State of the Environment/Sustainability Reporting	23
2.5 Summary of Part 2	26
<b>PART 3 INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS ON LOCAL AGENDA 21</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 International local Agenda 21 surveys	27
3.2 The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign	28
3.5 The LASALA project	29
3.6 United Kingdom	33
3.7 New Zealand	35
3.8 Canada	36
3.9 Summary of Part 3	36
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>55</b>



## Introduction

In developing a national Local Agenda 21 (LA21) milestone framework for Local Government it is useful to examine some of the key stages and issues in LA21 development in Australia and overseas. The aim is to identify the key themes and criteria that have developed in LA21 and related initiatives. This review is divided into four parts. Part 1 examines some of the key LA21 documents that have been produced in the last 10 years, focusing primarily on those published in Australia. Part 2 looks at other related developments in Australian Local Government over the last 10 years that are relevant to LA21. Part 3 looks at some major international LA21 initiatives with a particular emphasis on UK, New Zealand and Canada - countries with similar government structures to Australia.

## Part 1: Key local Agenda 21 Documents

### 1.1 Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is where LA21 started. Agenda 21 was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Summit meeting in June 1992 (United Nations, 1992). It is a global partnership for sustainable development that sets out actions we can all take to contribute to global sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Agenda 21 identifies three important elements in progressing towards sustainable development: relevant national strategies, plans, policies and processes; the integration of environment and development issues in decision-making; and active community involvement. It includes an extensive range of objectives, activities and means of implementation to achieve this.

LA21 has developed from one small chapter (chapter 28) of Agenda 21 as a mechanism to encourage greater involvement by local authorities in delivering the programs and changes outlined in Agenda 21 (see section on 'local Agenda 21' below).

#### 1.1.1 Key features of Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is divided into four sections and 40 chapters. The four sections are: social and economic dimensions; conservation and management of resources for development; strengthening the role of major groups and means of implementation. The chapters identify the key issues, the role of each of the identified major groups and means of implementation. The key issues include: poverty, changing consumption patterns, integrated decision making, biodiversity conservation, human settlements, sustainable agriculture, protection of natural resources including the atmosphere, oceans, freshwater etc. The major groups that are identified as having key roles to play in progressing towards sustainable development are: women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-government organisations, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technical community, farmers and Local Government (see section on 'local Agenda 21' below for more details). The means of implementation includes issues such as finance; technology; education, public awareness and training and information for decision making. Each chapter outlines a number of programme areas or aims; the basis for action outlining why the programme area is important; the overall objectives for the programme; activities to meet those objectives and the means of implementing those activities. The full version of Agenda 21 can be found on the United Nations website ([www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21text.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21text.htm)).

The preamble to Agenda 21 makes two statements concerning the implementation of Agenda 21:

- Successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of Governments. National strategies, plans, policies and processes are crucial in achieving this.
- Agenda 21 is a dynamic programme. It will be carried out by the various actors according to the different situations, capacities and priorities of countries and regions in full respect of all the principles contained in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It could evolve over time in the light of changing needs and circumstances.

A copy of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development is a set of 27 principles which underpin the idea of sustainable development (see Appendix 1).

### 1.1.2 The current situation

A 1997 review of Agenda 21 by the United Nations reaffirmed that in the UN's view Agenda 21 remains the fundamental programme of action for achieving sustainable development and its implementation remained vitally important and more urgent than ever (United Nations, 1997). The review recognised the gains that had been made but also the need for urgent action on some issues. It suggests that active encouragement of LA21 is one mechanism to assist in addressing these issues. In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Second Earth Summit) being held in Johannesburg, South Africa, will review national and international progress on Agenda 21, 10 years after its adoption.

## 1.2 Local Agenda 21

Agenda 21 recognised that most environmental challenges have their roots in local activities and so Local Government is one of the major groups recognised as being critical to realising the goal of sustainable development (United Nations, 1992, Chapter 28 Paragraph 28.1). Chapter 28 itself is relatively short and provides little detail about the actions local governments should take. However, around two thirds of the 2509 actions identified in Agenda 21 require the active involvement of Local Government. The lack of detail given in Chapter 28 has resulted in a range of interpretations and guidelines on what LA21 is and how to produce an LA21 strategy. A number of these guides have been produced in Australia and are described in more detail in sections 1.4 - 1.8 below.

### 1.2.1 Key features

Chapter 28 highlights the importance of local government's role and a number of elements to consider in developing a local Agenda 21. Specifically:

- Local government plays 'a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development'
- LA21 is a consultative process whereby each council enters into 'a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopts "a local Agenda 21".'
- The consultation and consensus building should be seen as a two-way learning process. Firstly, councils 'learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies.' Secondly, it is intended that the process of consultation 'increase household awareness of sustainable development issues'.
- 'A council's programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified based on local programmes adopted.'
- All councils 'should be encouraged to implement and monitor programmes which aim at ensuring that women and youth are represented in decision-making, planning and implementation programs.'
- 'Representatives of associations of local authorities are encouraged to establish processes to increase the exchange of information, experience and mutual technical assistance among local authorities.'

The aim of LA21 is to implement local actions to achieve the objectives of Agenda 21. There are a number of objectives for each of the Agenda 21 programme areas.

They are many and varied and not all are directly relevant to Australian Local Government. Some examples of those that are are given in Table 1.

**Table 1 Examples of some of the objectives for some Agenda 21 programme areas.**

Chapter	Programme area	Objectives
Promoting sustainable human settlement development	Promoting sustainable land-use planning and management	To provide for the land requirements of human settlement development through environmentally sound physical planning and land use so as to ensure access to land to all households and, where appropriate, the encouragement of communally and collectively owned and managed land. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of women and indigenous people for economic and cultural reasons.
	Promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements	To extend the provision of more energy-efficient technology and alternative/renewable energy for human settlements and to reduce negative impacts of energy production and use on human health and on the environment.
	Promoting sustainable construction industry activities	First, to adopt policies and technologies and to exchange information on them in order to enable the construction sector to meet human settlement development goals, while avoiding harmful side-effects on human health and the biosphere, Second, to enhance the employment generation capacity of the construction sector. Governments should work in close collaboration with the private sector in achieving these objectives.
Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources: application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources.	Integrated water resources development and management	Integrated water resources management is based on the perception of water as an integral part of the ecosystem, a natural resource and a social and economic good, whose quantity and quality determine the nature of its utilization. To this end, water resources have to be protected, taking into account the functioning of aquatic ecosystems and the perennality of the resource, in order to satisfy and reconcile needs for water in human activities. In developing and using water resources, priority has to be given to the satisfaction of basic needs and the safeguarding of ecosystems. Beyond these requirements, however, water users should be charged appropriately.

	Water and sustainable development	The development objective of this programme is to support local and central Governments' efforts and capacities to sustain national development and productivity through environmentally sound management of water resources for urban use. Supporting this objective is the identification and implementation of strategies and actions to ensure the continued supply of affordable water for present and future needs and to reverse current trends of resource degradation and depletion.
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Source: United Nations (1997).

### 1.2.2 The current situation

The 1997 review of progress on Agenda 21 reported that 'the efforts of local authorities are making Agenda 21 and the pursuit of sustainable development a reality at the local level through the implementation of "Local Agenda 21s" and other sustainable development programmes (United Nations, 1997). A 1996 survey by the International Council for Local Environment Initiatives (ICLEI) found that 1812 local governments around the world were developing a LA21 program (see section 3.1 'international surveys' below). A survey of Australian councils in 1998 found that around 200 were involved in LA21, local ESD or other sustainable development initiatives (Cotter, 1999). There are 665 Australian councils. This national average hides the regional variation in LA21 uptake. The highest level of commitment is in South Australia where 34 councils (50% of the total) are undertaking an LA21 program (DEH, 2000).

## 1.3 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development

The *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* (COAG, 1992) was endorsed by Australian Heads of Government in 1992. It is Australia's principle national response to Agenda 21. Although the Australian Local Government Association signed on behalf of Australian Local Government (ALGA), the Strategy acknowledges that whilst the ALGA 'will do all within its power to ensure compliance, it cannot bind local government authorities to observe the terms of this Strategy'. The Strategy reflects the specifically environmental concerns of the 1980s and early 1990s - hence the inclusion of the word 'ecologically'. It defines ESD as 'development which aims to meet the needs of Australians today, while conserving our ecosystems for the benefit of future generations'. It then highlights two main features which distinguish an ecologically sustainable approach to development:

we need to consider, in an integrated way, the wider economic, social and environmental implications of our decisions and actions for Australia, the international community and the biosphere

we need to take a long-term rather than short-term view when taking those decisions and actions.

### 1.3.1 Key features

The Strategy sets out the broad strategic and policy framework under which governments are expected to cooperatively make decisions and take actions to pursue ESD in Australia. The intention is that it be used by governments to guide policy and decision making, particularly in those key industry sectors which rely on the utilisation of natural resources. Like Agenda 21, the National Strategy is very wide-ranging and makes specific reference to the need for continuing economic

development and various social measures as well as environmental management. There was no detail on the role councils were/are expected to play.

The national LA21 milestone framework must be consistent with the Strategy's core objectives and guiding principles shown in Table 2. Key points to note are:

- The emphasis on integration of social, environmental and economic considerations.
- The need to consider the global implications of actions.
- The call for community involvement in decision-making.

All of the above reflect the overall objectives of Agenda 21.

Table 2 Australia's goal, core objectives and guiding principles for the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development.

The Goal is:

Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

The Core Objectives are:

To enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations; to provide for equity within and between generations; and to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The Guiding Principles are:

Decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations; where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation; the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered; the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised; the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised; cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms; decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them.

These guiding principles and core objectives need to be considered as a package. No objective or principle should predominate over the others. A balanced approach is required that takes into account all these objectives and principles to pursue the goal of ESD.

Source: COAG (1992).

The National Strategy examines ESD in relation to sectoral issues (e.g. agriculture, forestry) and intersectoral issues (e.g. biodiversity, landuse planning) and outlines objectives for each issue. Table 3 shows those objectives that overlap with the Agenda 21 objectives shown in Table 1. Both focus on key issues of reducing impacts on the environment and human health whilst meeting the demands for advancing human welfare, however the National Strategy objectives target some issues specific to a more developed economy e.g. improving the amenity of local urban areas.

**Table 3 Some of the objectives outlined in the *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*.**

Chapter	Objectives
Urban and Transport Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to promote urban forms which minimise transport requirements, and improve the efficiency of land supply and infrastructure provision</li> <li>to encourage the future development of urban transport systems which provide opportunities to limit the use of fossil fuels</li> <li>to promote subdivision and road design patterns that provide the greatest potential to utilise energy efficiency dwelling design, with provision for and use of public transport modes</li> <li>to improve the amenity of local urban areas</li> </ul>
Land Use Planning and Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to encourage environmental and economic land use decision making which takes full account of all relevant land and resource values and to establish and operate systems of land use decision making and dispute resolution</li> <li>to achieve clarity, certainty and accountability in the processes used to clarify access to land and to determine change of use</li> </ul>
Water Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to develop water management policies which are based on an integrated approach to the development and management of water resources</li> <li>to develop and implement the most effective mix of water resource management mechanisms</li> </ul>

Source: COAG (1992).

### 1.3.2 The current situation

Despite the good intentions of the National Strategy for ESD, progress in meeting the objectives and principles has been variable. In general, progress appears to have been best in the area of the environment/natural resource management. Certainly this is true at the national level (see Productivity Commission, 1999) and in many cases at the local level (e.g. DEH, 2000). It is worth noting that in the Productivity Commission's review of the implementation of ESD by the Commonwealth Government, good outcomes were associated with high degrees of stakeholder involvement and the formation of partnerships to achieve mutually agreed, integrated ESD (Productivity Commission, 1999).

Interestingly Australia is the only country that has chosen to use the term 'ecologically sustainable development', elsewhere 'sustainable development' is used. Whilst the term ESD does recognise the importance of the ecologically principles underpinning social and economic well-being, it has possibly contributed to the view that ESD and LA21 is a greenie or environmental concept. The Strategic Partners and other Australian and New Zealand councils have reported difficulties in commencing LA21 initiatives or choosing not to use the LA21 name for this reason. The Productivity Commission (1999) reported that in the Commonwealth

Government 'ESD is often equated with the environment' and this led to a view among some agencies that consider their core business is not related to the environment reporting that they had not undertaken any ESD activities. A greater emphasis on the social and economic dimensions of ESD and the integration of the three strands might encourage more broad support for sustainable development/LA21.

Further extracts from the National Strategy are contained in Appendix 4.

## **1.4 Managing for the future : a local government guide**

*Managing for the Future: a Local Government Guide* (DEST, 1994) was the first Australian guide to LA21. Funded by the Commonwealth Government, it was a project of the Municipal Conservation Association, now Environs Australia, the Local Government Environment Network. The Guide is divided into two parts - Part one provides background information on LA21 and Part two is guidance on developing an LA21.

### **1.4.1 Key features**

The guide emphasises the need to develop Local Government systems to manage for the future to achieve sustainability. It outlines a number of key issues in doing this:

- Sustainability - as distinct from sustainable development. The guide defines sustainability as 'the ability to maintain a desired condition over time' and sustainable development is 'a tool for achieving sustainability, not the desired goal'.
- Integrated planning and policy-making - integration of environmental, economic and social factors should occur at the earliest stages of landuse planning when it is likely to be more effective. Policies, strategies and programs should also reflect this integration.
- Long-term strategic management - a LA21 requires planning on a longer time frame than the 3 to 5 years currently used in corporate/annual planning. 25 years or more is more appropriate for addressing long-term sustainability issues.
- Involvement - progress towards sustainability requires community involvement since it cannot be achieved by local governments alone.

The guide also includes six guiding principles of managing for the future:

- The precautionary principle - where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- Equity within and between generations - current and future generations should have fair access to benefits across a wide range of areas of life.
- Solutions orientation - taking an active not reactive approach aimed at preventing problems, not developing cures for symptoms.
- Commitment to continuous improvement - achievement of a long term goal requires ongoing work and a commitment to making continuous improvement towards that goal.
- Accountability - accountability to communities is not just about providing access to information. It means providing opportunities for community members to engage in two-way communication with the council about policies and principles that are guiding decision-making.

- Information sharing and openness - sharing information with communities and other councils is a good way to keep informed about what is happening and who is involved in making changes.

The guide also includes a seven step approach for developing a LA21 (Table 4).

**Table 4 The seven steps in developing a LA21 outlined in *Managing for the Future*.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Step 1 Getting started</b> - establishing a team; considering resources; reporting to council.</li> <li>• <b>Step 2 Creating a climate of support</b> - develop an information strategy; publicise and promote the undertaking widely and encourage people to become involved; research the local issues and develop an accurate community profile; establish a database of community information, groups and local issues; disseminate information on examples of local issues; place local issues in the global context.</li> <li>• <b>Step 3 A council-community partnership</b> - establish a partnership for LA21; select a steering committee and working groups; determine and publicise the community vision.</li> <li>• <b>Step 4 Focus on the future</b> - develop and publicise community goals; establish local principles for action; investigate and evaluate the current situation; establish agreement on the need to change current management systems; formulate new policy directions for council and appropriate actions; publicise widely and encourage comments.</li> <li>• <b>Step 5 Implementation</b> - share information with other communities, local authorities and other spheres of government; show who is responsible for implementing actions; begin implementation on new policy directions and actions.</li> <li>• <b>Step 6 Reporting</b> - report on LA21; publicise widely in many forms and languages; advertise changes to council practices and systems.</li> <li>• <b>Step 7 Standing back</b> - evaluate the sustainability of actions; establish monitoring programs and make regular reports; review policies and actions not making progress; share experiences with other local authorities; celebrate outcomes.</li> </ul>
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Source: DEST (1994).

#### 1.4.2 The current situation

*Local Action: A Training Guide* (see next section) was released as a companion to *Managing for the Future* in 1996. Both were superseded by the release of *Our Community: Our Future* in 1999 (see section 1.7).

## 1.5 Local Action: A Training Guide

*Local Action: A Training Guide* (Cotter and Westcott, 1996) was a follow up to *Managing for the Future*. It provided additional information and examples and checklists of procedures that can be used to undertake in the seven steps outlined in Table 4.

## 1.6 The Newcastle Declaration

The *Pathways to Sustainability: Local Initiatives for Cities and Towns* conference was held in Newcastle in 1997. The conference and its proceedings (City of Newcastle, 1997) showcased local sustainability initiatives and is seen as a major contributing factor to increased national recognition of LA21 in Australia (DEHAA, 1999). The conference resulted in the signing of the Newcastle Declaration which calls for action at all levels, particularly the local level, to address the objectives of Agenda 21. The Declaration recognised that LA21 was fundamental for enhancing sustainability and made a commitment to addressing sustainability at the local level (Table 5).

**Table 5 The local commitment to addressing sustainability included in the Newcastle Declaration.**

We declare our commitment, as local governments and communities, to enhancing global sustainability, by developing processes at the local level based on:

- Assisting our own and other communities to progress toward local sustainability by sharing and learning from each other.
- Ensuring that all sectors, groups and citizens in our local communities, including adults, youth and children are given equal opportunity for active participation and partnership in the process of developing Local Agenda 21 action plans.
- Simultaneously achieving economic, social, cultural and ecological goals by integrating them in the design and implementation of all local policies, programs and projects.
- Recognising the rights of indigenous peoples and the special contributions which they can make.
- Acknowledging the importance of difference and diversity in formulating and implementing Local Agenda 21 plans.
- Adopting a strategic and long-term approach to setting priorities and targets in order to achieve community-determined visions and goals.
- Establishing realistic short-term action plans with participatory mechanisms for monitoring, feedback, and accountability.
- Celebrating the diversity within and between local communities and respecting and learning from minority voices and the aspirations of different cultural groups.

Source: [www.iclei.org/iclei/newcstle.htm](http://www.iclei.org/iclei/newcstle.htm)

### 1.6.1 Key features

Key features of the Declaration are a call for:

- All local governments to 'embrace the goal of global sustainability' and 'monitor and review on an annual basis and report on progress at the Rio + 10 review in 2002'.

- 'National governments to provide a policy framework and the necessary resources to support national LA21 programs'.
- 'National and international investment and development assistant programs to support LA21 action plans and related measures'.
- 'All governments to increase their proportion of annual expenditure on demonstration projects which enhance sustainability'.

The Newcastle Declaration also highlighted the role of international and national local government organisations in addressing LA21. Namely that they should:

- Facilitate the exchange of information on implementing LA21.
- Recognise the importance of research, community education, capacity-building and monitoring in local action for sustainability.
- Report on the progress of LA21 on behalf of all local governments and communities.

### **1.6.2 The current situation**

The Declaration clearly demonstrates the importance of local government commitment to sustainability, the need for community participation in the process and for ongoing monitoring and review processes and also the need for support from other levels of government and the private sector. A 1999 survey of council involvement in LA21 found that most of those undertaking LA21 activities had started work in 1997 following the Newcastle Declaration (Whittaker, 1999). However, Whittaker also reports almost all of the surveyed councils were struggling to engage the community fully in LA21 work. In terms of support for Local Government it would have to be said that in the four years since 1997, with the exception of South Australia, support for LA21 in Australia has been limited and ad hoc. Although even in South Australia, LA21 is driven primarily by Local Government with some support from the State Government but no obvious support from the private sector. Similarly, with the exception of the South Australia Partnership for Local Agenda 21, the role that Local Government organisations in Australia have adopted does not reflect that outlined in the Declaration.

## **1.7 Our Community: Our Future**

*Our Community: Our Future A Guide to Local Agenda 21* (Cotter and Hannan, 1999) is the latest Australian guide to LA21 and was published by the Commonwealth Government in 1999. It was intended to provide practical guidance on how to develop a LA21.

### **1.7.1 Key features**

The guide identifies five 'action areas' or parts in developing a LA21 process (Table 6) which are examined in some detail and includes case studies and experiences of councils across Australia. The Action Areas are similar to the five milestones developed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) for its Local Agenda 21 Campaign (ICLEI, undated a). However, ICLEI's milestones place greater emphasis on the community driving the process. Specifically through a multi-sector stakeholder group overseeing the process, and completing a sustainability audit on conditions and trends in the community, and through community involvement in monitoring and annual evaluation.

### **Table 6 The five Action Areas in a LA21 process identified in Our Community: Our Future.**

**Action Area 1: Preparing the ground** - identify council structures, strategies and resources to be used to develop a Local Agenda 21 with the support of the council, staff (including senior management) and the community

**Action Area 2: Building partnerships** - establish an understanding of the community and develop ways and means of extending awareness and involvement in LA21

**Action Area 3: Determining vision, goals, targets and indicators** - set out what the council and the community wish to achieve, ideally broken down into goals with indicators and targets.

**Action Area 4: Creating a local action planning document** - prepare a statement of actions that the council will undertake in order to realise each target; this includes timeline, budget and responsible officers for each action.

**Action Area 5: Implementing, reporting, monitoring and reviewing** - consider whether the actions are helping to achieve the targets, whether progress is being made towards the goals and whether any aspect of the LA21 needs changing.

Source: Cotter and Hannan (1999).

*Our Community: Our Future* identifies seven key principles of LA21:

- **Integration** — the effective integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in decision making.
- **Community involvement** — recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved, nor significant progress made toward it, without the support and involvement of the whole community.
- **Precautionary behaviour** — where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- **Equity within and between generations** — fairness and equal access to opportunities both in our lifetimes, as well as for future generations.
- **Continual improvement** — the declining environmental situation means there is an imperative to take immediate action to become more sustainable and to make continual improvement.
- **Ecological integrity** — to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

### 1.7.2 The current situation

*Our Community: Our Future* remains the most current Australian guideline on LA21 published by the Commonwealth Government, although in 2000 the Commonwealth published *Localising Agenda 21: A Guide to Sustainable Development for the APEC Region* (CoA, 2000). Australia made a commitment to producing this Guide as part its commitment to the target set by Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers for Sustainable Development in 1997 which is for an APEC-wide target of doubling the number of Local Authorities with Local Agenda 21s by 2003. The Guide follows the same five step approach used in *Our Community: Our Future* and includes LA21 case studies from the Asia-Pacific Region. The South Australian Government also published a LA21 guideline in 1999 (see next section).

## 1.8 Local Agenda 21 The South Australian Experience

In 1999 the South Australian Government and the Local Government Association in consultation with the South Australian Partnership for Local Agenda 21 produced

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*Local Agenda 21 The South Australian Experience* (DEHAA, 1999). These guidelines outline a process for developing a LA21 program and is based around the experiences of South Australian Councils involved in LA21.

### **1.8.1 Key features**

The guidelines describe a four stage process for developing, implementing and reviewing a LA21 program (Table 7). This is not necessarily a linear process and different steps can be occurring concurrently. The guidelines also identified a number of core features including:

- LA21 is a long-term commitment to achieve local ESD and is a permanent feature of the way in which the council carries out its functions and responsibilities.
- Full integration of the LA21 planning process with the overall corporate and strategic planning of a Council ensures that environmental, social and economic considerations are incorporated in all decision-making.
- Linking local issues and actions with identified global issues is a core feature of LA21.
- The key issue is encouraging community ownership through the active community participation in decision-making and implementation.
- LA21 is not just an environmental plan, rather it is about the balanced integration of the ecological, social and economic needs of the community.

**Table 7 The four stage process for developing, implementing and reviewing a LA21 program.**

<p><b>Getting started</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a commitment at a policy and budgetary level to undertake LA21</li> <li>• Create a climate of support and awareness of what LA21 is about</li> <li>• Set in place the decision-making structure and processes to facilitate the program with full community participation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Setting priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly define (council and community) a vision of what sustainability will mean to the area in the long term and what priority issues need to be addressed to achieve the vision.</li> <li>• Assess what the Council and community are already doing or need to do to address these issues.</li> <li>• Draft policy statements, management plans and action plans which are integrated with the Council's corporate and strategic planning process and linked with other community environmental initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on existing initiatives.</li> <li>• Establish systems to ensure that the plan is implemented, e.g. environmental management systems.</li> <li>• Set up and continue partnerships to maintain the program in the long term.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation – reporting and review mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set in place mechanisms and systems that ensure a long-term commitment to the monitoring, review and evaluation of LA21, for example the use of SoE reporting.</li> </ul>
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Source: DEHAA (1999).

### 1.8.2 The current situation

In 2000 the South Australian Partnership for LA21 began a process of review and forward planning. The Department for Environment and Heritage produced a discussion paper *The South Australian Partnership for LA21 - Identifying Future Directions Discussion Paper* (DEH, 2000). The four stage process was reviewed as part of this process and the discussion paper provides an overview of South Australian experiences in using the process. Other issues included in the discussion paper are: the use of LA21 terminology; linking indicator setting and data management at the local, regional and state level; and partnership arrangements and the role of the LA21 Partnership.

## 1.9 Milestone approach discussion paper

*A Milestone Approach to Local Agenda 21* is a draft discussion paper prepared in 2000 for the National Office of Local Government (Griffith, 2000). The paper comprises a review of LA21, discussion of a theoretical basis for LA21, the results of a survey with key informants on developing an integrated approach to local sustainability, case studies on regional approaches to sustainability and a suggestion for a milestone approach to LA21. The milestone framework draws on Local Government experiences with the Cities for Climate Protection Program and builds

on a theoretical framework for sustainable development that is outlined in the discussion paper. There are six milestones:

**Milestone 1** - adopt a Council or regional authority resolution to form a partnership for sustainability.

**Milestone 2** - build a sustainability guidance system. This milestone comprises four parts corresponding to four areas of the local sustainable development included in the framework. These are:

**Milestone 2a** - adopt shared preferred futures for the area and translate into a set of goals.

**Milestone 2b** - adopt an explicit statement of how sustainability is interpreted locally and how it fits into good local governance for that area. The statement would most probably be expressed as a set of principles and be translated into policies relating to each goal.

**Milestone 2c** - adopt a prioritised rolling plan of innovative action to implement policies and other action.

**Milestone 2d** - adopt new systems based on best practice for practice areas identified as potentially unsustainable.

**Milestone 3** - establish benchmarks or baselines for all four areas of the guidance system, preferably future orientated.

**Milestone 4** - set realistic outcomes targets for each of the four areas of the system based on annual and/or 5 year strategic planning cycles of the Council.

**Milestone 5** Stocktake on achievement of targets.

**Milestone 6** - reset targets, the benchmarks and the guidance system after each stocktake.

The proposed milestone framework was put forward to initiate discussion and the author makes it quite clear that further analysis would be needed following any feedback. The milestone framework includes many of the important elements of a LA21 process e.g. identifying a preferred future, actions, targets, and review. However, it concentrates on measuring progress in developing and implementing LA21 from an operational perspective, rather than assessing the broader process issues such as effective community involvement and ongoing partnerships. These are key aspects of LA21 and as such should be included in any milestone/assessment framework.

## 1.10 Summary of Part 1

Agenda 21 recognised the need for individual countries to interpret and apply its principles in appropriate ways, and that strategies would evolve over time (Agenda 21, Chapter 1, paragraph 1.6). The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development is Australia's key sustainability strategy, although it contains no detail on the role for councils nor does Chapter 28 of Agenda 21.

This vacuum was filled by the proponents of LA 21, in Australia chiefly Environs Australia (formerly the Municipal Conservation Association) and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). A number of guides have been produced on how councils should implement a Local Agenda 21 process or program. These have transformed the rather vague call by the Rio Earth Summit for a consensus on "a local Agenda 21" into a series of recommendations and criteria for a systematic approach as part of a world-wide local government effort.

Table 1 shows the evolution of these LA21 planning processes in Australia. Note, the table is not meant to be read horizontally since the guidelines are not directly comparable. Instead the Table shows how recommendations and criteria have to some extent been modified over time. However, a number of key themes are apparent including:

- consultation with the community;
- building partnerships with the various stakeholders (community, voluntary sector, private sector, other levels of government etc.);
- developing strategies; and
- implementation, assessment and review.

These guides outline how to develop an LA21. Whilst they highlight the importance of practical action, they have tended to focus attention on a distinctive set of steps for consultation and planning that appear to set LA 21 apart. For many people in local government, this has created the impression of an additional burden or 'optional extra', rather than an integral element of councils' activities. Now, ten years after the introduction of Agenda 21, there is a need to start the process of assessing progress in meeting its objectives. This includes assessing progress on initiatives that lie outside a formal LA21 framework. That is the focus of this project.

**Table 8 Evolution of planning processes for LA21.**

(This table is not meant to be read horizontally, but rather is provided for comparison.)

Chapter 28 (1992)	Managing for the Future (1994)	Our Community: Our Future (1999)	SA Partnership model (1999)
A dialogue with citizens, local organisations and private enterprise. Ensuring representation from women and youth.	Getting started Creating a climate of support A council and community partnership	Preparing the ground Building partnerships Determining vision, goals, targets & indicators	Getting started including support & partnerships Setting priorities including a vision and action plans Implementation
Consensus on and adoption of best strategies to achieve sustainable development and Agenda 21 objectives.	Focus on the future Implementation Reporting Standing back.	Creating a local plan Implementing, reporting, monitoring & reviewing.	Evaluation - reporting & review.
Assessment and modification of local programmes, policies, laws and regulations relating to the programmes adopted.			

Sharing of information, experience and technical assistance with other local authorities.			
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Source: Griffiths (2000) with minor modifications.

## Part 2: Other Local Government developments

There have been a number of other developments in Local Government that are of relevance in considering the progress and future of LA21. Many of these are statutory requirements. They include, but are not limited to:

- a focus on governance;
- a greater emphasis on the importance of planning in managing a range of local issues;
- integrated local area planning,
- the inclusion of ESD principles and public participation provisions in Local Government legislation,
- state of the environment/sustainability indicators reporting

Each of these is discussed briefly below.

### **Governance**

In their book *Reinventing Government* Osborne and Gaebler (1993) define governance as 'the process by which we collectively solve problems and meet our society's needs - government is the instrument that we use'.

Governance encompasses not just government, but also the private sector and civil society (individuals and groups) and the systems, procedures and processes in place for planning, management and decision-making.

There is increasing emphasis on the leadership role of local government leadership in enhancing quality of life and promoting greater participation in the processes of local governance. Kevin Sproats (1997) suggests that to achieve better local governance councils will need to:

- Treat their constituents as citizens with a broad stake in local affairs as well as simply customers or clients of particular services.
- Exercise local community leadership, bringing people together for the common good and tackling difficult changes, rather than retreating to a narrow managerial style focused on a more limited role.
- Foster sound public judgement – informed and thoughtful debate within the community – rather than simply respond to often ephemeral public opinion.
- Build the human and social capital of their communities as well as managing financial and physical assets.

These same features are needed to advance local sustainability.

Cousin (2000) maintains three distinct forms of planning support governance functions and that each is used for different but related purposes and results in a variety of outputs and outcomes. These are: corporate planning, strategic planning and spatial planning. These and other Local Government planning activities are considered further in the next section.

### **Planning**

Local governments already undertake a range of planning functions that underpin LA21.

#### **Corporate Planning**

An important part of the reforms introduced to with amendments to the Local Government Acts in the period 1989 to 2000, has been the requirement for Councils to produce annual corporate or management plans on a three-yearly basis and update them annually (Wensing 1997; Marshall and Sproats 2000).

These provisions were inserted on the rationale that:

the strategic management cycle by its very nature required Councils to consult extensively with local communities to ensure that policy directions reflected public opinion, and

that the process of consultation and objective setting inherent in the strategic management cycle would inevitably lead to public participation becoming a policy priority in itself (Marshall and Sproats, 2000).

Corporate planning can be described as a process used to formulate administrative policies and processes and organisational budgets aimed at achieving the most efficient and effective way of managing an organisation's day-to-day activities (Cousin 2000). It includes business and financial planning aimed at ensuring prudent financial management within a predetermined budget or achieving an economic return or surplus.

#### **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning is a process of planning, policy formulation and implementation that is intended to align an organisation's activities with specified aims and objectives, and to provide a point of reference between the organisation and its external environment. The successful implementation of strategic planning outputs depends very much on how the processes of strategic planning are carried out. If the processes have been done well, then there should be a broad consensus between the major stakeholders about what the key issues are, how the external environment will affect the community in the future, what the strengths and weaknesses are, and how the strategic objectives are to be achieved. As with LA21, much of the success of strategic planning processes should come from the process itself, as distinct from the objectives and strategies that are the outputs from the process (Morris et al., 2001).

#### **Spatial Planning**

Cousin (2000) describes spatial planning as urban, regional or town planning seeks to guide and control the shape, form and orderly functioning of a geographic area – usually towns or cities and their surrounding areas. Good spatial or landuse planning is also crucial in addressing sustainability because it ensures that

environmental, social and economic issues can be considered at the outset and not dealt with in hindsight. Proposed amendments to the planning system in NSW specifically address sustainability and include provisions for the use of sustainability indicators with which to review performance against goals (DUAP 2001). Similarly, recent changes to land use planning legislation and processes in other States have also included objectives relating to sustainability.

#### Social and Community Planning

Councils in some States and Territories have a statutory responsibility to prepare social/community plans. In NSW these plans are designed to examine the needs of the local community and formulate strategies which the Council and/or other agencies should implement to address these needs. As with LA21 there is clear recognition that the Council cannot provide all the services that its community needs, and there is a need for co-operation and partnerships with other government agencies, the private sector and community organisations. Councils are required to consider the needs of particular target groups, including women and children - the same groups targeted by Agenda 21.

#### Planning for Community Well-being

The Local Government Community Services Association (LGCSA 2001) has developed a framework for progressing and measuring community well-being within the parameters of Local Government's roles and responsibilities. Community well-being is seen as an inclusive concept concerned with the common good of all people. The framework recognises that a mix of social, cultural, economic and environmental factors impact upon community well-being outcomes which can be described in terms of liveability, conviviality, equity, adequate prosperity, sustainability, viability and vitality. Such outcomes are also dependent upon a commitment to core cultural values of community well-being, a holistic and integrated approach to community development and participatory democracy at the local level.

The framework for Councils and their communities focuses on a package of seven key well-being components that provide the context for Council's roles in developing and managing local facilities and services. The components of the framework reflect Local Government's key responsibilities relating to the social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of community life. The components are, arts and cultural development; community safety; economic development; environmental sustainability; housing; leisure and recreation; and public and environmental health. The LGCSA's guide encourages local Councils to develop community indicators in each of these areas.

#### Health Planning

Local Government has traditionally operated a range of public and environmental health services in their local communities. These activities have broadened over time and can now be linked in with national and state level environmental health strategies.

In Victoria, almost all councils are either implementing or developing municipal public health plans. The Municipal Public Health Planning framework being promoted by the Department of Human Services (DHS, 2001) uses the strengths of a number of approaches to public health planning that are relevant to LA21:

Strategic local area planning – integrating physical, social and economic planning with community participation;

Social model of health – participation and empowerments contribute to individual and community well-being;  
Health promoting systems – recognising and taking into account the inter-relationships between people and places;  
Focusing on health outcomes; and  
Implementation of partnership approaches.

The framework makes specific reference to links between it and the National Strategy for ESD and Agenda 21.

#### Natural Resource Management Planning

Councils are involved in planning for a wide range of natural resource management issues including: biodiversity, catchments, water, salinity, estuary, floodplain, waste, greenhouse and air quality. Whilst Local Government plays a key role in natural resource management, it is recognised that effective management will require partnerships with other spheres of government and the private sector and community organisations.

## 2.2 Integrated Local Area Planning

The concept of 'Integrated Local Area Planning' (ILAP) was developed by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in the early 1990's as an important tool for improving the overall performance of Local Government. The concept has some strong similarities with LA21. In 1990, The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) produced a report highlighting the need to reform, rationalise and co-ordinate the delivery of services at the local level (ALGA, 1990). The report identified a number of potential problems in Local Government's relationships with the Commonwealth and State Governments and in the delivery of services, including for example, lack of recognition of Local Government as a legitimate part of the Australian federal system and lack of clarity in the delineation of the roles and responsibilities of each sphere of government. To promote better, more appropriate service delivery, and in association with measures to improve inter-governmental relationships, the report recommended that Councils take the lead to bring about co-operative needs based planning at the local level. This was seen as an approach which would focus the efforts of the three spheres of government on the particular needs and circumstances of different local communities, whilst linking local planning and priorities to national and State strategies (ALGA, 1992).

### 2.2.1 ILAP's aims

ALGA developed the concept of ILAP as an important tool for improving the overall performance of Local Government. ALGA's vision for ILAP was that local Councils would become guardians and promoters of the overall well-being of local communities, exercising leadership and co-ordinating the activities of other agencies to establish and realise desired futures for local communities (ALGA, 1993).

Integrated local area planning has three critical elements:

- broadly based strategic planning to review the full range of local conditions and needs;
- cooperation and coordination between agencies and spheres of government to link activities and address issues; and
- effective corporate planning and management by councils to drive the process (ALGA, 1993).

Each of the elements is required if the concept is to be applied by Local Government to their operations. These three elements are the same as those now being used to drive community planning and the promotion of well-being in the UK (see section on 'Community planning' in section 3.1 below).

Research undertaken jointly by ALGA and the Commonwealth Government showed, amongst other things, that State and Commonwealth policies and programs were poorly integrated into local area planning and management processes (ALGA, 1990; 1992). One of ILAP's strengths is that it recognises that the difficulties facing local communities are inter-related and therefore require integrated approaches to addressing these problems and improve the well-being of communities.

The Commonwealth Government funded an ILAP program from 1992-93 to 1994-95 to promote and encourage the adoption of ILAP reforms in Local Government. The administrative arrangements Program involved the appointment of a national facilitator based at the ALGA and a facilitator in each State and the Northern Territory based at the State Local Government Associations.

### **2.2.2 ILAP evaluation**

A national evaluation of the ILAP Program towards the end of the three year funding period found a number of factors contributed towards it being developed in a disjointed way (Purdon, 1995). This, combined with the failure to adequately involve all stakeholders in its design, impacted on the implementation of the Program and the application of the concept (Purdon, 1995).

Since the initial expression of the concept it has been progressively refined and different elements have been given different emphasis over time in both Local Government and Program documentation. In its initial form the concept is an appropriate approach to improving the overall well-being of communities. The review reported that: 'The progressive development of the concept has meant that it has been interpreted differently by different stakeholders and has affected the operation of the Program and the outcomes which could be expected from it' (Purdon, 1995). These differences meant that there was limited shared understanding of the objectives of the concept of ILAP, which impacted on the operation and effectiveness of the ILAP Program. Similar difficulties have plagued the development of LA21.

The evaluation found that expression of the concept in the context of the ILAP Program had compromised its appropriateness as some and not all of the elements had been applied. Prominence was given to strategic planning and inter-agency co-operation while very few projects focussed on the need to improve corporate planning and management within Councils. In practice, unless all the elements are applied, the ILAP concept is not applied (Purdon, 1995). A number of stakeholders were also critical that Commonwealth and the State Governments had not fully embraced the concept (Purdon, 1995). Again similar observations can be made about the status of LA21 in Australia. LA21 is strongly biased towards environmental issues, neglecting social and economic considerations, hence the fundamental integration of these three pillars of sustainability is not carried out and the LA21 concept is not applied. And certainly there is a lack of recognition of the role of the Commonwealth Government and the State Governments in addressing local sustainability.

The ILAP evaluation recommended that 'the identity of ILAP as a concept be retained in order to maximise the capacity to produce systemic change through the retention of dedicated funding by the Commonwealth Government for the development,

dissemination and application of the ILAP concept by Local Government' (Purdon,1995). The ILAP Program lapsed at the end of 1994-95. As a result the systematic changes did not occur.

### 2.3 ESD and public participation in Local Government legislation

ESD principles and public participation provisions are included in the Local Government Act in some States (Table 9). These principles and similar participation provisions are also included in other Local Government legislation e.g. the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* in NSW.

**Table 9 Some of the ESD and public participation provisions in the NSW and South Australian Local Government Acts.**

NSW Local Government Act 1993	South Australia Local Government Act 1999
<p>Objects of Act</p> <p>a) to provide the legal framework for an effective, efficient, environmentally responsible and open system of local government in New South Wales,</p> <p>c) to encourage and assist the effective participation of local communities in the affairs of local government,</p> <p>d) to give councils: the ability to provide goods, services and facilities, and to carry out activities, appropriate to the current and future needs of local communities and of the wider public, a role in the management, improvement and development of the resources of their areas.</p> <p>e) to require councils, councillors and council employees to have regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development in carrying out their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Objects of Act</p> <p>to encourage the participation of local communities in the affairs of local government and to provide local communities through their councils, with sufficient autonomy to manage the local affairs of the area.</p> <p>to encourage local government to provide appropriate services and facilities to meet the present and future needs of local communities.</p> <p>to encourage local government to management the natural and built environment in an ecologically sustainable manner.</p>
<p>The Council's charter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development</li> <li>• to have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its decisions.</li> </ul>	<p>Functions of a council</p> <p>to plan at the local and regional level for the development and future requirements of its area.</p> <p>c) to manage, develop, protect restore, enhance and conserve the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner.</p>
The Councils functions	Principal role of a council

<p>A council may provide goods, services and facilities, and carry out activities, appropriate to the current and future needs within its local community and of the wider public, subject to this Act, the regulations and any other law.</p>	<p>b) to provide and coordinate various public services and facilities to develop its community and resources in a socially just and ecologically sustainable manner.</p>
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Social, environmental and economic considerations have long been part of Local Government's agenda, but the introduction of ESD principles into the legislation places the focus on the integration of all three aspects into planning, management and decision-making. It is intended that this be achieved through implementation of the ESD principles, namely the precautionary principle, conservation of biological diversity, intergenerational equity and improved valuation of costs to include environmental costs and incentives. Whilst these principles are quite clear, their application in day-to-day decision-making is often difficult, particularly as tools such as life cycle analysis, used to fully cost goods and services, are still very new. This combined with varying degrees of knowledge and commitment to the aims of ESD means that extent to which local Councils are able to effectively apply the principles of ESD to the full gamut of their roles and functions remains patchy and varied throughout Australia. A cautionary note about ESD principles in NSW legislation is that they do not include recognition of intragenerational equity i.e. social equity and justice issues for the current generation which means that the principles as laid out in the legislation are skewed towards environmental and economic considerations.

Local Government Acts also clearly allow for public participation in Council decision-making. The reliance on representative democracy, where all responsibility, all decision-making and accountability rests with the elected representatives is no longer the optimum model of democracy. Good planning and governance requires an emphasis on open, deliberative modes of planning and governance (Forester 1999). The underlying principle is to make sure that the voices that are normally silent are heard, and moreover, that hearing them leads to including their perspective in whatever decisions ensue (Sandercock 1998; Gleeson and Low 2000:211). The principles of LA21 recognise the right of people to participate in community life and to influence decisions affecting sustainability, at least at the local scale.

Some councils are now exploring innovative ways of include those not traditionally involved in such processes, although it is often difficult and takes considerable time and resources. Nevertheless, councils have a statutory responsibility to address this key aspects of Agenda 21.

## 2.4 State of the Environment/Sustainability Reporting

Many Councils now produce State of the Environment (SoE) reports. Annual SoE reporting is a statutory requirement in NSW where Councils must report on eight environmental sectors (land, water, biodiversity etc.). As part of the process Councils are also required to consult with their communities; involve communities in environmental monitoring and use appropriate environmental indicators to monitor changes in each of the eight sectors.

Indicators are a management tool that allow a particular issue to be monitored over time to determine a trend which may be positive, negative or unchanged. Indicators can be used in a number of ways, including to monitor progress towards a particular goal or vision, to provide sound information for use in policy development and for

benchmarking. In addition to using indicators for SoE reporting NSW Councils have a statutory obligation to report on a number of corporate performance indicators (e.g. amount of recyclables collected per capita, number of development assessments lodged). However, such indicators do not enable assessment of progress on the sustainability or quality of life issues that are of most importance to local communities. In response to this, Councils in Australia and overseas are working with their communities to develop sustainability/quality of life/strategic indicators. Importantly, as with LA21, there is a general view that the process of developing indicators, involving discussions, partnerships, improved knowledge and understanding, and negotiation, is as important as the indicators themselves.

In general sustainability indicators are:

- Used to monitor an issue of local importance — there is generally an attempt to balance environmental, social and economic issues;
- Used as part of a strategic planning or directions process whereby a desired future is identified with actions and programs required to reach that future planned and implemented;
- Linked to a desired performance outcome or target against which progress over time can be measured;
- Relevant and acceptable to local communities.
- Easily reported for example as a one page city snapshot or report card.

Examples of sustainability indicators developed by the City of Onkaparinga in South Australia and the City of Newcastle in NSW are shown in Table 10. Issues such as housing affordability, infrastructure provision, resource consumption and employment are clearly local sustainability issues that could be addressed through a LA21 process. Development and use of sustainability indicators such as these enables the monitoring, reporting and review part of the LA21 process to be undertaken.

**Table 10 Sustainability indicators developed by the City of Onkaparinga and the City of Newcastle.**

City of Onkaparinga	
Indicator	Measures
<p>Housing affordability Affordability of housing will affect choice of location, access to employment, education, essential services and proximity to social and family networks. <b>Target:</b> increase the capacity to enter the housing market.</p> <p>Infrastructure Examines the ability to address demands placed on current infrastructure and efforts to address future needs. <b>Target:</b> maintain and/or improve infrastructure to address the needs of the community (to be determined locally).</p>	<p>Tenure by number and type of dwellings Residential median prices and rental payments Number of applicants for rental assistance living in the LGA.</p> <p>upgrades to infrastructure (number, type &amp; expenditure) New infrastructure projects (number, type &amp; expenditure) Number of complaints received relating to public assets.</p>
Newcastle City Council	
Indicator	Measures
<p>Resource consumption Potable water supply for urban communities is a finite resource. Its provision incurs a significant social, economic and environmental cost through the construction of storage, treatment and conveyance infrastructure. Council's Green House Action Plan promotes the use of energy generated from renewable resources and targets emission reductions from activities that generate greenhouse gas emissions. Communities throughout Australia are aiming to reduce the amount of waste being disposed to landfill. <b>Desired outcome:</b> Reduce per person consumption of non-renewable energy, disposal of waste to landfill, consumption of water.</p> <p>Diversity of industry sectors Just as a healthy environment is determined by sufficient biological diversity, so a sustainable economy is considered to be one that is not heavily reliant on one industry sector for ongoing employment. The Sydney Major Statistical Region is known to employ across a greater diversity of industries than Newcastle. The diversity index measures the difference in the range of employment by industry between two regions, with an index of zero indicating no difference and therefore a healthy range of job</p>	<p>a) The amount of potable water consumed by the Newcastle community, the amount of wastewater discharged and the amount of wastewater re-used or recycled, as ration per person.</p> <p>b) The amount of non-renewable energy consumed by the Newcastle community.</p> <p>c) Volume of waste disposed to landfill at Summerhill waste management facility.</p> <p>The degree to which employment is spread across all industry sectors, compared to another region that is known to have greater industry diversity measured by employment. Measured using:</p>

<p>types for the Newcastle workforce.  <b>Desired outcome:</b> Increase diversity of employment by industry in Newcastle.</p>	<p>The diversity index for industry in the Newcastle Statistical Division, benchmarked against the Sydney Major Statistical Region and the whole of Australia.</p> <p>The diversity index is based upon the total number of employees in each industry.</p>
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Source: The City of Onkaparinga (2001); The Australia Institute & Newcastle City Council (2000).

## 2.5 Summary of Part 2

Over the last ten years there have been a number of initiatives or tools have been developed to assist in working towards the same fundamental goal of taking a strategic approach to delivering services to local communities and managing the local area. Some of the key ones are strategic planning, integrated local area planning, the inclusion of ESD principles and public participation provisions in Local Government legislation, and sustainability indicators.

Strategic planning initiatives have been aimed at enhancing Local Government's capacity to plan and govern for its community. Integrated local area planning recognises a) the value of a strategic approach to reviewing local conditions and needs; b) the importance of interagency and intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to address issues; and c) the need for effective corporate planning and management by councils to drive the process.

In some States the Local Government Act and other legislation now includes ESD principles and councils are required to take these into account in planning and managing the area and providing appropriate services and facilities to meet the current and future needs of the communities. This gives statutory force to the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations in planning, managing and decision-making which is the fundamental principle underlying Agenda 21.

State of the environment or sustainability reporting highlights the need to monitor and report a) on the outcomes of activities and programs undertaken to achieve specific aims or targets and b) on issues that are of importance to and have meaning for local communities and the Council.

Indicators are a reporting tool, not a means of implementing actions, however by reporting on the outcomes of actions their use does focus attention on what is really being achieved. These and other Local Government initiatives can be used to progress towards sustainable development whether or not they are being used as part of a LA21. What this really highlights is that LA21 isn't anything new, it is merely an umbrella framework through which many Local Government activities can be linked.

## Part 3 International progress on Local Agenda 21

### 3.1 International local Agenda 21 surveys

In 1996-97 the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development conducted a global survey of LA21 activity (ICLEI & UNDP/PCSD, 1997). The survey found LA21 activities were occurring in 43 countries. ICLEI, in conjunction with the Secretariat for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, is currently undertaking a new survey, the results of which will provide input to the Agenda 21 review in Johannesburg next year. To distinguish LA21 from any other activities, the surveys have defined LA21 and five key elements which distinguish it (Table 11). The latest survey is available on ICLEI's website ([www.iclei.org/](http://www.iclei.org/) under 'LA21 survey').

**Table 11 LA21 definition and criteria used in the ICLEI surveys.**

<p>Definition of LA21:</p> <p>A participatory, multisectoral process to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 at the local level through the preparation and implementation of a long-term, strategic action plan that addresses priority local sustainable development concerns.</p> <p>LA21 criteria:</p> <p><b>Multisectoral engagement</b> in the planning process through a local stakeholder group which serves as the coordination and policy body for moving towards long-term sustainable development.</p> <p><b>Consultation with community partners</b> such as community groups, non governmental organisations, business, churches, government agencies, professional groups and unions, in order to create a shared vision and to identify proposals and priorities for action.</p> <p><b>Participatory assessment</b> of local social, economic and environmental needs.</p> <p><b>Participatory target setting</b> through negotiations among key stakeholders or community partners in order to achieve the vision and goals set out in a community action plan.</p> <p><b>Monitoring and reporting procedures</b> including local indicators to track progress and to allow participants to hold each other accountable to a community action plan.</p>
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Source: ICLEI & UNDP/PCSD (1997); ICLEI & UN/PCSD (undated).

Based on the results of the survey, ICLEI/UNDP/PCSD (1997) made three main conclusions and recommendations:

- National LA21 campaigns should be supported. Formally endorsed and financially supported by the national government- have been the most powerful

catalyst of LA 21. They are particularly successful when operated through a national local government association or similar, and when governed by representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders.

- National and international investment and development assistance programmes should be made responsive to LA21 action plans. This is because it cannot be assumed that local governments will be successful in implementing LA21 without considerable national and international assistance. Linking assistance to LA21 implementation is one way of assisting this.
- Supportive national policy and fiscal frameworks for the implementation of LA21 action plans are required. This is required to avoid inconsistencies which, for example, can result in local actions being undermined by national policies.

## **3.2 The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign**

The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign was launched at the end of the European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, which took place in Aalborg, Denmark in 1994. The objective of the Campaign is to promote development towards sustainability at the local level through Local Agenda 21 processes, by strengthening partnership among all actors in the local community as well as inter-authority co-operation, and relating this process to the European Union's action in the field of urban environment. The Campaign is the biggest European initiative for local sustainable development and Local Agenda 21. Its supporters are major European networks and associations of local authorities including the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, ICLEI, United Town Organisation and Healthy Cities, who co-ordinate their efforts through a Coordinating Committee. More details can be found on the Campaign's website ([www.sustainable-cities.org/sub2.html](http://www.sustainable-cities.org/sub2.html)). Many of the councils involved in the LASALA project (see section 3.5 below) reported they had benefited from being involved in networks such as the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign (LASALA Project Team, 2001a).

### **3.2.1 The Aalborg Charter**

The Conference participants adopted the Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability (The Aalborg Charter). Signatories to the Aalborg Charter participate automatically in the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign and adopt the Charter. The Charter comprises thirteen commitments which are based around the central themes and principles of LA21 (see Appendix 2). Progress against the Charter was used for evaluation in the LASALA project (see section 4.3 below). To date, over 1300 local and regional authorities (metropolitan areas, cities, towns, counties, etc.) from 38 European countries have signed up to the Aalborg Charter.

### **3.2.2 The local Agenda 21 performance criteria**

A set of criteria for the implementation of a Local Agenda 21 process was prepared for the Campaign (ICLEI, 1996). These criteria were also used as a basis to define the evaluation criteria for applications for the 'Sustainable Cities Award' run in co-operation with Council of European Municipalities and Regions ([www.ccre.org/](http://www.ccre.org/)). The preamble to the criteria stresses that the quality of an LA21 process is a critical component of LA21 (Appendix 3). The performance criteria are concerned more with the characteristics, tools and qualities of the process rather than the results which, in this case are seen as the goals of the long-term action plan, not actual on-the-ground outcomes. The performance criteria are based on Chapter 28 of Agenda 21. They are viewed as 'milestones on the way to a complete local Agenda 21 process' (ICLEI, 1996). The criteria address three dimensions of a LA21 process - the document, the

political culture and elements of the planning process. Table 12 gives an overview of the three dimensions. The full document is provided in Appendix 2. In reality, the performance criteria are really performance areas since no details of specific performance criteria are given. Nevertheless it provides a framework of issues to be addressed in evaluating LA21.

**Table 12 Overview of the three dimensions of a local Agenda 21 process**

<p>I. The document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local Agenda 21:</li> <li>• transfers the global perspective of "Agenda 21" to the local level</li> <li>• is aiming at sustainability</li> <li>• integrates economic, social and environmental development</li> <li>• has a long-term perspective and long term goals</li> <li>• is implementation oriented</li> <li>• is aiming at the development of structures which are sustainable in the long-term</li> </ul> <p>II. The Political Culture</p> <p>The Local Agenda 21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is a discussion on visions, directions of development, values and basic decisions for the future of the community</li> <li>• is a discussion with all groups of the society</li> <li>• is based on the principle of consensus building</li> </ul> <p>III. Elements of the Planning Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set-up of a Stakeholder Group or "Local Agenda 21-Forum"</li> <li>• Community Consultation"</li> <li>• Agreement on a Vision for the Sustainable Development of the Community</li> <li>• Review of Existing Plans and Strategies concerning the Future Development of the Community</li> <li>• Development of Sustainability Indicators</li> <li>• Sustainable Development/Management Audits</li> <li>• Definition of Targets and Priority Setting</li> <li>• Reporting and Controlling Mechanisms</li> <li>• Link the Local Perspective to the Global Dimension</li> <li>• Adoption of the Local Agenda 21 by the City Council</li> </ul>
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Source: ICLEI (undated b).

It is interesting to note that two of the performance criteria clearly link LA21 to Agenda 21 through 'transferring the global perspective of Agenda 21 to the local level', and 'linking the local perspective to the global dimension'. Although examining the links between local and global issues was explicitly included as part of the LA21 process in earlier Australian LA21 guides (see *'Managing for the Future'* above), this is not part of the process outlined in the current guide *Our Community, Our Future*.

### **3.5 The LASALA project**

The Local Authorities' Self-Assessment of Local Agenda 21 (LASALA) project aimed to 'assess the extent to which European LA21 initiatives have encouraged moves

toward new forms of governance<sup>1</sup> in terms of the changing relationship between local governments and their communities and in terms of changes to local government practices, approaches and procedures in order to secure eco-efficient urban management<sup>2</sup> (LASALA Project Team 2001a; b). Over 150 European local authorities were involved. Not all councils have a process specifically entitled 'LA21', but they are all addressing urban sustainable development and many are signatories to the Aalborg Charter (see 'The Aalborg Charter' above). Limited information on the LASALA project can be found on ICLEI's European website ([www.iclei.org/europe](http://www.iclei.org/europe)) under 'programmes and projects'.

### 3.5.1 The self assessment methodology

The LASALA self assessment methodology comprised two exercises. Exercise one was a questionnaire about what had been achieved in the local sustainability process. This was completed by the LA21 Coordinator. Exercise two involved a group workshop to discuss in greater detail the different aspects of local sustainable development, specifically the level of progress made. The LASALA project chose to evaluate the LA21 initiatives against two sets of criteria, both of which were chosen because they are widely accepted perspectives on the intent of Chapter 28. Firstly, five characteristics developed by ICLEI (Table 13) that the LASALA Project Team (2001a) consider 'enable an evaluation of the extent to which the principles of LA21 have become embedded in local authority thinking and practice'. These are not the same five characteristics used by ICLEI in the international surveys. Rather than focussing on the process of developing a LA21, they focus on the LA21 'product' and outcomes - the integration of issues; integration of interests; the long-term character; the global dimension; and sustainable management of resources. Secondly, the 13 Aalborg Charter Commitments (Appendix 3) that 'enable an assessment of the extent of progress towards the practice and process of local sustainability across Europe'. Although an evaluation of the self assessment methodology has not yet been released, it is intended that councils could incorporate the method into their regular sustainable development monitoring.

**Table 13 The ICLEI five characteristics<sup>3</sup> used as evaluation criteria in the LASALA project.**

**The integration of issues:** environmental objectives are linked with economic and social objectives.

**The integration of interests:** in a culture of dialogue and participation, all groups in society are to be involved.

<sup>1</sup> Governance can be defined as 'the process by which we collectively solve problems and meet our society's needs - government is the instrument that we use' (Osbourne and Gaebler, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> The LASALA Project Team (2001a) defined eco-efficient urban management as 'a collective used to refer to the use of effective management instruments, processes and practices in the pursuit of urban environmental sustainability, in particular the thrifty use of natural resources'.

<sup>3</sup> According to the LASALA Project Team (2001) these characteristics were defined by ICLEI in 1998 as part of the process of evaluating progress towards LA21 worldwide. However, they are different to the five criteria used in international LA21 surveys discussed in section 4.1.

**Its long-term character:** measures and projects are based on long-term objectives keyed to the precautionary principle.

**Its global dimension:** impacts of local action on global development are measured, ways of counteracting the global uneven distribution of consumption and wealth are identified. The local contribution to global sustainability is an explicit goal.

**Sustainable management of resources:** utilisation of natural resources is based on the rate at which new resources are formed; substance inputs into the natural regime are based on its capacity to degrade them.

Source: ICLEI (1998) cited in LASALA Project Team (2001a; b).

### 3.5.2 The good practice model

The LASALA Project Team also developed the LASALA Good Practice Model. Using the Model, the results of the two self assessment exercises were used to evaluate LA21 processes and identify good practice amongst the European councils involved. The Model uses nine criteria which are divided into two groups - enablers (for the process) and results (of the process) and are weighted to reflect their importance (Table 14). The division into enablers and results was done to explain where, from a time point of view, the criterion are most important. However, in reality it is very difficult to state a specific place or order for any single criterion and so it is considered that this division may not be important (LASALA Project Team, 2001a; b).

**Table 14 Criteria used in the LASALA Good Practice Model.**

Type of criteria	Weight in the analysis*
Enablers (for the process)	40%
Identifying the relevant topic areas for the LA21 process	10%
Commitment to the process	20%
Resources available	10%
Results (of the process)	60%
Existing sustainable development plan	10%
Level of integrated approach	10%
Level of participation	20%
Partnership between council and the community	5%
Level of public awareness	5%
Level of continuity	10%

Source: LASALA Project Team (2001a; b).

\* 5% = important but not necessary in every LA21 process or model. 10% = Important for all processes and models. 20% = high importance due to Agenda 21 matters or process success possibility.

Based on the responses to exercises 1 and 2, the LASALA Project Team identified some good practice councils that clearly had better LA21 initiatives in place (LASALA Project Team 2001b). Comparison between the good practice councils and the other councils involved in the LASALA project found that, as a group, the good practice councils scored more highly on each of the Model criteria than the other councils. Two significant findings were:

- The difference in score between the good practice councils and the others is greatest for the three enabling criteria - 'the foundations for the LA21 process'. The biggest differences were in identifying the problems and having resources for LA21 processes. The good practice councils were better at identifying; measuring and analysing relevant local topics for the LA21 process and had better resources in terms of funding, personnel and expertise.
- Regarding the results criteria, the biggest differences between the good practice and other councils were seen in the criteria related to the existence of a sustainable development plan and the level of integrated approach. The better practice councils tended to have a good plan for their LA21 work and had put actions in place to make lasting changes in the administration, the management and the political agenda with a view to continuous improvement.

In drawing conclusions from the work, the LASALA Project Team (2001a; b) state 'the theoretical assumption that a well managed and planned LA21 process should make a difference concerning the possibilities to achieve local sustainability, seems to hold, at least to some extent.' But then it seems fairly obvious that good planning and management is likely to lead to better outcomes.

The LASALA Project Team considers that, given the brief nature of Chapter 28, it is quite remarkable that LA21 has been so influential. It suggests three factors that have assisted in this:

- the work and support of networks such as the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign and ICLEI which promote LA21/local sustainability;
- the impact of the LA21 'brand' (which presumably is more successful in Europe than it appears to be elsewhere);
- the power of the arguments and positions which comprise the concept of 'local sustainability'.

It is quite probable that the lack of the first two factors may have contributed to the more low key approach to LA21 in Australia (with the exception of South Australia where both a network and the brand exist).

## 3.6 United Kingdom

There has been considerable up-take of LA21 by UK councils with an estimated 67% undertaking the process (Hughes, 2000). This high success rate is considered to be the result of a combination of support from a national LA21 campaign involving the Central Government and Local Government organisations and a Prime Ministerial target for all local authorities to adopt a LA21 by the end of 2000 (DEH, 2000; Hughes, 2000). The national campaign involved a range of initiatives including: A cross-sectoral LA21 Steering Committee set up to promote and support LA21; production and distribution of a range of guidance material; establishment and administration of networks of LA21 practitioners; and advocacy and liaison activities between different sectors at a national and international level. Hughes (2000) reports that more direct support has been apparent since the Labour Government came into power in 1997 and major Government policies and documents recognise the value of LA21. This is in contrast to the situation in Australia where there is little or no mention of LA21 in Commonwealth or State Government policies.

### 3.6.1 Recent developments

Reviewing LA21 in the UK at the end of 1999, Hughes (2000) found there was a move from LA21 being seen as an environmental issue to be addressed through the Council's planning or environmental health section, to it requiring integration into all policy and programme development. He found there two significant changes occurring:

- Getting all local authorities to deliver on LA21 and getting it 'placed in the CEO's office and embedded in the corporate policy team' were seen as priorities.
- There was a change (albeit a slow one) from LA21 being a council-led process to a more devolved community process which Hughes sees is a test of the extent of commitment to LA21 and participatory democracy.

However, Hughes reports that overall implementation of LA21 and sustainability was still patchy and it was rare to find a council where sustainability was integrated into every service and strategy.

By 2000 the LA21 Steering Committee which had overseen much of the LA21 development in the UK noted that there was a widespread view that LA21 has 'reached a watershed in its existence' (E&RE, 2000). Reflecting the change in focus in the UK, the LA21 Steering Committee is now called the UK Local Sustainability Group and its focus has moved away from encouraging councils and communities to develop LA21s to encouraging integration of sustainable development principles in community planning. Community planning is one of two significant changes introduced into UK local government in 2000. The other is best value. They both have implications for local sustainability and LA21.

### 3.6.2 Community planning

Under the *Local Government Act 2000*, local authorities in England and Wales have a discretionary power to do anything they need to ensure that they can promote and improve the well-being of their areas and contribute to sustainable development. Well-being includes economic, social and environmental well-being. Authorities are expected to work with other agencies, voluntary bodies and local communities to develop comprehensive community strategies for promoting well-being now and for future generations. There is a big emphasis on collaboration and co-operation between local authorities, their strategic partners and neighbouring local authorities.

This recognises that local authorities are not primarily responsible for some important local services (eg. health), as well as the vital role of partnerships with community organisations and the private sector.

Community strategies, which can address issues such as reducing social exclusion or health inequalities or promoting neighbourhood renewal, can complement LA21 strategies or the two could be integrated. Either way, community strategies are expected to take an integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. A community strategy should provide a mechanism for an authority and its partners to identify the priorities of the local community, to reflect these in a long-term vision of the community, to identify a set of specific objectives, and to draw up an action plan for the partnership to follow in order to achieve those objectives (DETR, 2001). In this regard, the parallels with LA21 are quite clear. In many ways LA21 has moved on to become community planning and well-being.

However, whilst this new emphasis on broader strategic planning and social and economic issues might re-focus the sustainability debate and lead to better integration, there is widespread concern amongst proponents of LA 21 that environmental issues will drop off the agenda. Some argue that the 'green' tendency of many LA 21 strategies was necessary and desirable to ensure proper attention to environmental problems, even if that represented a narrower interpretation of Agenda 21 than its authors intended. They see a risk of the new community planning process being so all-encompassing that it will become too generalised and result in bland policy statements rather than specific outcomes. Real action on environmental and other issues could get lost in rhetoric. This debate to some extent echoes that in Australia about retaining the word 'ecologically' in ESD: unqualified, the term 'sustainability' can mean all things to all people and fail to provide meaningful policy direction.

### 3.6.3 Best value

Best value is a duty on local authorities to deliver services to clear standards covering both cost and quality, by the most effective, economic and efficient means available. The aim is to seek continuous improvement in efficiency, effectiveness and the quality of local services. It is intended that councils will consult with their communities on service aims and standards. As part of the process councils must prepare an annual best value performance plan which will be audited by inspectors from the Audit Commission. In addition Local authorities must report annually on their performance against over 220 performance indicators and set targets for improving performance. One of these indicators concerns LA21/community planning (Table 15). The change in the performance indicator between 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 reflects the introduction of the community planning requirements. It is interesting to note that this is an indicator of corporate health under a section called 'planning and measuring performance' (DETR, 1999; DETR, 2000).

**Table 15 The LA21/community planning performance indicator reported by local authorities in the UK in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002.**

Indicator	Definition
2000/2001 Did the Authority adopt a LA21 Plan (as set out in Sustainable local	Document developed with the participation of the local community and containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A vision statement identifying sustainability issues and aims for the area and indicators for the quality of life and state of the</li> </ul>

communities for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century*) by 31 December 2000? - Yes/No.	environment; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A plan of prioritised actions allocated to named individuals or bodies;</li> <li>• Implementation mechanisms including evaluation and review.</li> </ul>
2001-2002 Has the authority established a timetable for preparing a community strategy that works towards a long-term sustainable vision for the area? Yes/No	In order to answer 'yes' the authority must be able to answer 'yes' to all of the following: Have you identified the local bodies needed for an over-arching, community-based, strategic partnership? Have you involved them in drawing up the timetable? Have you involved the council's LA21 officers and existing LA21 partnerships in developing your community based strategic partnership?

Source: DETR (1999; 2000).

\* DETR and LGA (1997).

Since this project aims to develop a national LA21 milestone framework for Australia, it is useful to examine the LA21 performance indicator used for 2000-2001 in more detail. The UK Local Government Association produced supporting advice on the indicator to assist inspectors or auditors in assessing whether or not an authority had met this requirement. It was expected that the authority should have addressed the following six components of a LA21 process that were outlined in *Sustainable Local Communities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (DETR and LGA, 1997):

- Managing and improving the local authority's sustainability performance
- Integrating sustainability issues into the local authority's policies and activities
- Awareness-raising and education
- Consulting and involving the wider community and the general public
- Working in partnership with others - Central Government agencies, business, community groups and the general public
- Measuring, monitoring and reporting the effectiveness.

Given the relatively recent introduction of community planning and best value to the UK, it will be interesting to observe progress on well-being/local sustainability.

### 3.7 New Zealand

Development of LA21 in New Zealand has been more on a par with Australia than the UK. Uptake by councils has been limited and there has been little Central Government support, although this has been changing since the election of the Labour Government in 1999. A 1999 study by the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment suggested a number of reasons why LA21 progress in New Zealand was slower than that in the UK (Hughes, 2000). Among these were:

- limited central Government support or leadership for sustainability;
- few champions unlike the UK where there are a number of champions in local government and local government associations;
- limited guidance material;
- limited networking/newsletters/information exchange etc.

Local Government New Zealand (the national local government association) conducted surveys on the 'State of Strategic Planning in New Zealand' in 1999 and 2000 (LGNZ, 2001). Among the aims the surveys sought to find out:

- the extent to which councils use LA21 in the development of strategic plans and
- the reasons for and against the adoption of LA21 principles by councils.

The majority (74 of 86) of councils have some form of Strategic Plan. Some (37) have a Strategic Plan that covers the community's activities as well as the Councils and this is seen a response to the wider governance and leadership role that New Zealand Local Government is now taking. A Strategic Plan is defined as having a clear vision that then enables actions required to reach the vision to be identified and resourced (LGNZ, 2001). The survey found that the aims, processes, principles and outcomes of LA21 and strategic planning undertaken by New Zealand local government are very similar. Both take a holistic approach to the future, involve the community in their preparation, involve a plan containing a vision and goals, and a means of monitoring and evaluating progress (LGNZ, 2001). The survey found that most councils use some of the principles and processes of LA21, but the majority do not like the term and do not promote it as such. The term 'sustainable development' is preferred. So it would appear that, as in the UK, LA21 in New Zealand is being addressed through another framework - in this case Strategic Planning. Although in contrast to the situation in the UK this has occurred by accident rather than due to the design of Central Government policy.

It is worth noting some other observations from the survey that are equally applicable in Australia and will remain as challenges in the foreseeable future in both Australia and New Zealand (LGNZ, 2001):

- Council staff found it difficult to enthuse other staff, politicians and the community about adopting LA21 or a similar program because it is seen as yet another thing to do and it is a voluntary process, unlike the many legislatively prescribed programs and activities that councils must do.
- To make sustainable development a reality, LA21 principles and frameworks need to be applied nationally, regionally and locally.
- Even using LA21 principles and frameworks and acknowledging sustainable development, the real test is whether the environmental, social and economic bottom-lines are any better.

### **3.8 Canada**

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) which is based in Toronto, Canada, reports that early results from the current worldwide LA21 survey (see section 4.1 below) suggest very few councils have a specific participatory sustainable development processes in place (ICLEI personal communication 1 November 2001). Furthermore, as in New Zealand, the term LA21 is rarely used. ICLEI also reports that there is no Central Government support for LA21 and that to some extent this makes it difficult to make an assessment of activities overall.

### **3.9 Summary of Part 3**

This overview of international LA21 initiatives reinforces the importance of LA21 as evidenced by the uptake of LA21 activities by councils around the world. The

international survey currently underway for the Agenda 21 review in 2002 will enable an up-to-date assessment of this.

The overview shows that a number of international frameworks for evaluating LA21 have been developed which provide a useful starting point for developing a national LA21 framework for Australia. Key aspects included in all the frameworks identified here are: the integration of social, environmental and economic issues; the participation of a range of stakeholders from the community, non-government and government sectors; a long-term commitment to LA21; and the formation of partnerships for developing, implementing and assessing progress. In addition, some of the frameworks highlight the importance of target setting, monitoring and reporting, and linking local issues to global issues and vice versa.

The 1996-97 international survey and the European LASALA project both found that national LA21 campaigns or national/international LA21 networks play an important role in progressing LA21. The LASALA project also found that the LA21 brand is an important influencing factor in the success of LA21 uptake in Europe, as it is in South Australia where it has been promoted by the South Australian Partnership for LA21.

It is interesting to note that the LASALA project also found that 'the power of the arguments and positions which comprise the concept of local sustainability' is another factor contributing to the success of LA21 in Europe. Certainly the argument for considering social, environmental and economic aspects in decision-making is a strong one. Evidence from the international literature and discussions with a range of stakeholders suggests that the principle issue facing most Local Government (and others) is understanding what sustainable development means at a practical level - in day-to-day decision-making and operations.

According to Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ, 2001) this means 'knowing what type of policy questions need to be asked to ensure that sustainable development is addressed in a complete way, and so that the right information is gathered to make comprehensive decisions about tradeoffs between social, economic and environmental concerns'. Expanding our knowledge and experience in this area remains a challenge. One of the goals of the national framework should be to encourage the sharing of knowledge and experiences. Certainly this was one of the aims of chapter 28 of Agenda 21 and was reiterated by the Newcastle Declaration (see sections 1.2 and 1.6 above).

A review of the status of LA21 in the UK, New Zealand and Canada - countries with similar systems of government to Australia - indicates that LA21 uptake in these countries has varied greatly. There has been considerable take-up of LA21 by councils in the UK where there has been strong Central Government support for LA21 which has resulted in the dissemination of guidance material; establishment and administration of networks; and advocacy and liaison activities between different sectors at a national and international level. The recent introduction of community planning and best value has led to a shift away from LA21 as the platform for delivering sustainable development to community strategies fulfilling this function.

Furthermore, the focus is on the promotion and improvement of the well-being of the area as a way of addressing sustainable development for current and future generations. Well-being includes economic, social and environmental well-being - the three pillars of ESD - but with more of an emphasis on social issues than has been the case in the last 10 years. One of the performance indicators that councils

must report on as part of the best value framework, is their progress in their LA21 or community strategy.

The lack of Central Government support for LA21 is believed to be one reason why few councils in New Zealand have really taken it up. Instead, many of the LA21 aims, processes, principles and outcomes have been used in the formation of Strategic Plans. The majority of councils have some form of Strategic Plan, some of which cover the community's activities as well as the Councils and this is seen as a response to the wider governance and leadership role that New Zealand Local Government is now taking. LA21 activity in Canada appears to be even more limited. Again there is no Central Government / national support. Based on this information it appears there is most activity where LA21 is supported at the national level. Indeed, the international survey of LA21 activity undertaken in 1996-7 found that national support plays a significant role in achieving success (see section 4.1 below).

## Appendix 1

### Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

**Principle 1** - Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

**Principle 2** - States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

**Principle 3** - The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

**Principle 4** - In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

**Principle 5** - All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.

**Principle 6** - The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries.

**Principle 7** - States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit to sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

**Principle 8** - To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

**Principle 9** - States should cooperate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

**Principle 10** - Environmental issues are best handled with participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

**Principle 11** - States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the environmental and development context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries.

**Principle 12** - States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. Trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. Unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. Environmental measures addressing transboundary or global environmental problems should, as far as possible, be based on an international consensus.

**Principle 13** - States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. States shall also cooperate in an expeditious and more determined manner to develop further international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage caused by activities within their jurisdiction or control to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

**Principle 14** - States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.

**Principle 15** - In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

**Principle 16** - National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

**Principle 17** - Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

**Principle 18** - States shall immediately notify other States of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the

environment of those States. Every effort shall be made by the international community to help States so afflicted.

**Principle 19** - States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith.

**Principle 20** - Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

**Principle 21** - The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilized to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all.

**Principle 22** - Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

**Principle 23** - The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

**Principle 24** - Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.

**Principle 25** - Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

**Principle 26** - States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

**Principle 27** - States and people shall cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the fulfilment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

## Appendix 2

### The Aalborg Charter

The following is an overview of the 13 Aalborg Charter principles or commitments taken from The LASALA Project Team (2001a). The full charter can be found on the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign website ([www.sustainable-cities.org](http://www.sustainable-cities.org)).

#### Notion and Principles of Sustainability

The idea of sustainable development is to achieve social justice and sustainable economies, without overburdening nature and destroying natural capital. Our standard of living, and way of life should therefore reflect this.

#### Local Strategies Towards Sustainability

Sustainability will not be achieved by an ad-hoc approach. It requires the incorporation of Sustainability principles in all the policies and practices which affect the operation of a city or town.

#### Sustainability as a Creative, Local, Balance-Seeking Process

The wide-ranging activities of a city constitute its overall ecosystem. The activities inter-relate and create an organic whole.

#### Resolving Problems by Negotiating Outwards

The town or city should attempt to find environmentally sustainable solutions within its own boundary. However, if the town or city is unable to resolve problems or imbalances itself, it works together with other municipalities, or the wider region or nation to develop sustainable solutions.

#### Urban Economy Towards Sustainability

A clean and healthy environment is a pre-requisite for investment and for the future economic development of a city or town. If the natural capital or a city/town is reduced or destroyed, economic sustainability will not be guaranteed. How is the natural capital maintained or preserved in the light of new forms of economic development?

#### Social Equity for Urban Sustainability

The basic social needs of citizens, such as access to water, food, housing, healthcare, education and employment are essential if sustainable forms of society are to be maintained in towns and cities.

#### Sustainable Land-Use Patterns

Landuse planning provides a mechanism to ensure that new developments are designed with sustainable concepts at their core. At the same time, the land-use planning system considers the relationship between the city, the rural hinterland, region and national planning.

#### Sustainable Urban Mobility Patterns

The need for less congested and polluted cities is a key objective for a more sustainable city. A less congested city is a more efficient and cleaner place and also ensures a healthier living environment.

#### Responsibility for the Global Climate

Climate change is a serious concern for the future of the planet, and its causes are varied. The local level has a key role to play in ensuring that adverse climate change is decelerated and ultimately reversed.

#### Prevention of Ecosystems Toxification

Prevention of the pollution of ecosystems and human health toxification.

#### Local Self-Governance as a Pre-Condition

The sustainable development of cities and towns is largely the responsibility of the individual city or town, therefore the necessary powers and opportunities are need at the local level if appropriate decision for a sustainable future are to be made.

#### Citizens as Key Actors and the Involvement of the Community

A consensus on the future sustainable development of the town or city requires that all sectors work together and recognise their individual responsibilities in delivering their local objectives for sustainable development. This also requires education, training and access to information for all sectors.

#### Instruments and Tools for Urban Management Towards Sustainability

In developing strategies and actions for sustainable development, it is also necessary to be able to assess their success/failure and to measure whether sustainable development is being incorporated within the overall urban management of the city or town.

## Appendix 3

### Performance Criteria for a Local Agenda 21 Process

The following Local Agenda 21 Performance Criteria were developed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 1996. This information is taken from ICLEI's website [www.iclei.org/la21gtp/material/eperfcrt.htm](http://www.iclei.org/la21gtp/material/eperfcrt.htm)

Why use performance criteria?

The basic question is what constitutes a Local Agenda 21 and how does it differ from other development plans your City might have already at hand? In a Local Agenda 21a new and comprehensive task, namely to aim at sustainability, corresponds with a new and comprehensive approach that should have certain qualities. It is more than giving a new name to existing programmes in the fields of economic, social and environmental development. On the other hand it is not about negating and replacing existing programmes in these fields of activity, but the LA 21 process should include an exercise of screening and if necessary improving them from a different point of view.

However, the term "Local Agenda 21" seems to be in danger of just becoming a label that can be used for many activities especially in the field of environment and by that lose its basic meaning and capability to support the necessary changes towards a sustainable development at the local level. The term "sustainable" itself already faces the problem of being watered down in its meaning by being used for many purposes and single activities which in the overall perspective are not really committed to sustainability.

The idea of "Local Agenda 21" is not only referring to a document as the result of a process but also very much to the qualities of that process itself. It seems quite obvious that a process that is aiming at changing the basic direction of almost all political decisions and is also deeply affecting the way people conduct there life is asking for a new way for making these decisions. Therefore the performance criteria which are given below are not so much concerned with the results (goals of the long-term action plan) themselves, which are different in every local authority due to local conditions, but with the characteristics, tools and qualities of the process leading to them.

Most of these can be directly taken out of chapter 28 of Agenda 21.

From this point of view it is quite obvious that performance criteria are needed to keep the standard and basic qualities of the approach.

Performance criteria are, of course, always of use as controlling instruments. Without denying this function we nevertheless would rather see them as milestones on the way to a complete Local Agenda 21 process to get the most out of it for a sustainable future of your local community.

#### I. The Document

The Local Agenda 21:

- transfers the global perspective of "Agenda 21" to the local level.

- AGENDA 21 is an agreement of more than 160 countries participating in the UNCED Conference in Rio 1992 to work towards sustainability. Local Agenda 21" is a term derived from Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 which describes the role of local authorities for reaching the global goals described in this document.
- is aiming at sustainability.
- integrates economic, social and environmental development
- The essential starting point of a Local Agenda 21, therefore, is to define the problem, i.e. to have a general understanding of what is meant by sustainability and what it is that a local community should be working towards.
- Sustainability has objectives that extend beyond the traditional forms of environmental management: it emphasises socio-cultural, economic and environmental issues that must be addressed if the needs of the present are to be met without compromising those of future generations. Even though many of them basically mean the same, there are various definitions of sustainability. One that is very widely used in Europe is the one from the Aalborg Charter which was signed, among others, by the Cities participating in "ICLEI's Local Agenda 21 Guidance and Training Programme".

According to the Aalborg Charter the idea of sustainable development is based on the carrying capacity of nature as the limiting factor. Accordingly social justice will necessarily have to be based on economic sustainability and equity, which both require environmental sustainability.

"Environmental sustainability means maintaining the natural capital. It demands from us that the rate at which we consume renewable material, water and energy resources does not exceed the rate at which the natural systems can replenish them, and that the rate at which we consume non-renewable resources does not exceed the rate at which sustainable renewable resources are replaced. Environmental sustainability also means that the rate of emitted pollutants does not exceed the capacity of the air, water, and soil to absorb and process them.

Furthermore, environmental sustainability entails the maintenance of biodiversity; human health; as well as air, water, and soil qualities at standards sufficient to sustain human life and well-being, as well as animal and plant life, for all time."

It is also recognised that sustainability is a process which needs a continuous effort and affects all decisions that have to be made in local policy.

"Sustainability is neither a vision nor an unchanging state, but a creative, local, balance-seeking process extending into all areas of local decision-making. It provides ongoing feedback in the management of the town or city on which activities are driving the urban ecosystem towards balance and which are driving it away. By building the management of a city around the information collected through such a process, the city is understood to work as an organic whole and the effects of all significant activities are made manifest. Through such a process the city and its citizens may make informed choices. Through a management process rooted in sustainability, decisions may be made which not only represent the interests of current stakeholders, but also of future generations."

LA21:

- has a long-term perspective and long term goals
- Once a local community has agreed to this general understanding of sustainability, it should establish a process by which to address the problem in its

specific local context and which should lead to a Local Agenda 21, a long-term action plan towards sustainability. Long-term means to develop clear perspectives for a sustainable life in the 21st century.

- is implementation oriented
- It is absolutely necessary for a Local Agenda 21 that it defines clear goals and indicates clear steps to reach them and not merely provides general declarations of intent.
- is aiming at the development of structures which are sustainable in the long-term
- A Local Agenda 21 is not aiming at short-term solutions for problem-symptoms but at the development of structures that are sustainable in the long-term, as for example mobility structures, structures to provide housing and social support as well as production and consumption structures which are designed for sustainability.

## II. The Political Culture

### The Local Agenda 21:

- is a discussion on visions, directions of development, values and basic decisions for the future of the community
- What the ideal of sustainability means in the context each single community should not be defined and decided by the local politicians and administration alone, but in a broad based discussion process.
- is a discussion with all groups of the society
- It is important that all relevant groups in the community especially the private economy sector are included. Only if this can be accomplished the long-term action plan for the to sustainability will have enough backing force for its implementation.
- is based on the principle of consensus building
- The involvement of all relevant groups of the community will also identify conflicts and opposite interests between them, which must be solved if a long-term, goal-driven collaboration is to be sustained. Even though it is more difficult to bring about a consensus than a decision by majority it is important for the LA 21 process that a consensus is reached in order to ensure a broad based support and a long term engagement and loyalty of all participants and the citizens in general for the implementation of the LA 21 action plan.

## III. Elements of the Planning Process

### Set-up a "Stakeholder Group" or "LA 21 Forum"

The consideration of social, economic, and environmental issues in an integrated way requires collaboration among the different institutions and organisations in a community that have a special interest in one of these issues. The local institutions not only focus on distinct issues, but operate according to the different dynamics and constraints of the governmental, private enterprise, NGO, and informal sectors. Local governments are well positioned to facilitate a collaborative planning process among local institutions, but they are themselves constrained by their own legal functions and institutional traditions from being able single-handedly, to implement an integrated LA 21 action plan. For this reason, the most fundamental element of the

integrated LA 21 planning approach is to establish an intermediary body between the formal governmental sector and the other sectors of a community. This "Stakeholder Group" or "LA 21 Forum" will provide a neutral vehicle through which all sectors and interested groups can contribute to research, planning, and implementation of sustainable development plans. This body should be set-up in accordance with the principles of democracy and representativeness.

#### Community Consultation

Public participation is absolutely crucial for the success of a Local Agenda 21 because its implementation depends on the loyalty and identification of the people with the goals defined in the long term action plan and with the community itself as their place of living in a spatial and social sense. It is also essential for the awareness raising process and the education of the public.

Community sustainability cannot be imposed in a top-down fashion. It requires the contribution of all community members. For this reason, broad based consultation with the help of representative groups in a community is an essential planning element. Consultation will identify the needs that guide individual and institutional actions and the resources that different parties can contribute to sustainable development.

#### Agreement on a basic Philosophy and Vision

Having established the Stakeholder Group or "LA 21 Forum" the next task is to agree on a statement of the philosophical background of the whole process. This should comprise the principles to be followed (why and how are we doing it?) and a vision which should embody the aspirations of the community for the future (where would we like to end up in the next century?). This creates an idea of the long-term perspective of the LA 21 process and also a common ground to act upon.

The philosophy and vision for the community should reflect the overall vision of a sustainable development (see above, The Local Agenda 21 is aiming at sustainability).

The review of existing plans and strategies concerning the future development of the community. This should happen on a comprehensive basis, taking into account economic, social and environmental development implications of these plans in the long term. If a cross sectoral planning approach is not already in practice this review should be done in a cross sectoral way within the city administration. By this the new structures for cross sectoral co-operation which are important for the implementation of the LA 21 can be established in the administration.

#### Development of Sustainability Indicators

In the La 21 Forum and with the help of community consultation a set of indicators should be developed which is useful and applicable to evaluate existing plans and programmes in terms of the agreed philosophy and vision for sustainability. Once there are agreed targets of a long-term action plan these indicators might be revised in order to be able to monitor the results of the implementation of this action plan.

#### Sustainable Development/Management Audits

The living conditions that people expect and the services that individuals and institutions seek through community life are provided through a variety of systems which have limited capacities and which require ongoing maintenance and investment. Sustainable development/management audits provide baseline data about the conditions of these systems, whether the environmental systems that

provide clean air and water; economic systems that provide jobs and income, energy and transportation; or social systems that provide medical care, education and other support. Many local authorities have already developed a tradition of environmental reporting/auditing which can serve as a basis for this broader based exercise. In this respect it is important to consider the dynamics of those systems and to focus planning on solving systemic problems rather than addressing problem symptoms.

#### Definition of Targets and Priority Setting

Once a community has established and prioritised the services and needs through consultation and has evaluated the ability of various systems to deliver these services, the LA 21 Forum must on this basis agree concrete targets for sustainable development. Concrete, practical targets are essential to the legitimacy and success of any long-term action plan. By means of indicators derived from these targets, the successful implementation of the targets can be monitored and evaluated.

#### Reporting and Controlling Mechanisms

By defining baseline conditions and establishing concrete targets, a framework is provided for measuring progress towards sustainable development with the help of the indicators developed. In order to measure this progress, specific mechanisms must be put in place that allow the participants of the LA 21 Forum to evaluate trends in development, to keep each other and the public accountable to targets, and to allow institutions to report on their activities and propose mid-course changes to any plan.

#### Link the Local Perspective to the Global Dimension

As mentioned above the Local Agenda 21 mandate is part of the Rio Agenda 21 document which is concerned with environment and development. The local community should be aware of the global consequences of their local actions especially their lifestyle. To form a partnership with a local authority from the developing countries on the common platform of Local Agenda 21 would definitely be of help in this respect.

#### Adoption of the Local Agenda 21 by the City Council

For the validity of the Local Agenda 21 long-term action plan it is absolutely crucial that it is adopted by the City Council. Only if this happens the document becomes a basic document for the policy of the local authority and the future development of the community.

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## Appendix 4

### Extracts from 'National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development' December 1992

#### **What is ecologically sustainable development?**

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) represents one of the greatest challenges facing Australia's governments, industry, business and community in the coming years. While there is no universally accepted definition of ESD, in 1990 the Commonwealth Government suggested the following definition for ESD in Australia:

'using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased'.

Put more simply, ESD is development which aims to meet the needs of Australians today, while conserving our ecosystems for the benefit of future generations. To do this, we need to develop ways of using those environmental resources which form the basis of our economy in a way which maintains and, where possible, improves their range, variety and quality. At the same time we need to utilise those resources to develop industry and generate employment.

Governments recognise that there is no identifiable point where we can say we have achieved ESD. Some key changes to the way we think, act and make decisions, however, will help ensure Australia's economic development is ecologically sustainable. There are two main features which distinguish an ecologically sustainable approach to development:

we need to consider, in an integrated way, the wider economic, social and environmental implications of our decisions and actions for Australia, the international community and the biosphere; and  
we need to take a long-term rather than short-term view when taking those decisions and actions.

#### **Part 1 - Australia's goal, core objectives and guiding principles for the Strategy**

##### ***The Goal is:***

Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

##### ***The Core Objectives are:***

to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations

to provide for equity within and between generations

to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The Guiding Principles are:

- decision making processes should effectively integrate both long and short term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations.
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered
- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised
- the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
- decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them
- These guiding principles and core objectives need to be considered as a package. No objective or principle should predominate over the others. A balanced approach is required that takes into account all these objectives and principles to pursue the goal of ESD.

## **Part 2 - Sectoral Issues - Challenges**

### ***Agriculture***

To facilitate the ecologically sustainable development of agricultural industries so that they contribute to long-term productivity and to Australia's economic well-being, and protect the biological and physical resource base on which agricultural industries depend, and improve human health and safety.

### ***Fisheries Ecosystem Management***

For fisheries management agencies throughout Australia to adopt a fisheries ecosystem management framework which will provide a more holistic and sustainable approach to management of aquatic resources.

### ***Forest Resource Use and Management***

To ensure Australia continues to refine and improve mechanisms for the ecologically sustainable management and use of its forests, by bringing together the commercial and non-commercial values of forests in such a way as to improve the material and

non-material welfare of all Australians, and to ensure all forest values can be utilised on a sustainable basis.

### ***Manufacturing***

To achieve a robust, internationally competitive, export-oriented manufacturing sector, which contributes to a stronger economy, operates in accordance with the principles of ESD, and efficiently uses the renewable and non-renewable resources on which manufacturing industries depend.

### ***Mining***

To further develop the mining industry in a way which manages the renewable and non-renewable resources on which it depends in an efficient manner which is also consistent with the principles of ESD.

### ***Urban and Transport Planning***

To achieve more sustainable use of energy and natural resources in urban areas through integrated urban and transport planning and more efficient sub-division and building design.

### ***Tourism***

To develop and manage the tourism industry in a way which conserves its natural resource and built heritage base and minimises its environmental impacts.

### ***Energy Use, Energy Production and Transport***

To limit production of harmful emissions without reducing economic efficiency, improve the availability, efficiency and affordability of alternative energy sources, and improve the technical and economic efficiency of urban and non-urban transportation.

## **Part 3 - Intersectoral Issues - Challenges**

### ***Biological Diversity***

To protect biological diversity and maintain ecological processes and systems.

### ***Nature Conservation System***

To establish across the nation a policy framework for the protection and management of nature conservation values, both inside and outside areas protected under legislation (ie protected areas).

### ***Native Vegetation***

To conserve and where appropriate, restore native vegetation to maintain and enhance biodiversity, protect river water quality and conserve soil resources, including on private land managed for agriculture, forestry and urban development.

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***Environmental Protection***

To establish and enhance policy and administrative frameworks for environmental protection in which governments and the community can develop effective and efficient measures to achieve environmental objectives while recognising the interrelationship with economic and social objectives.

***Land Use Planning and Decision Making***

To ensure land use decision making processes and land use allocations at all levels of government meet the overall goal of ESD and are based on a consideration of all land values and uses, while avoiding fragmentation, duplication, conflict and unnecessary delays.

***Natural Resource and Environment Information***

To improve the collection, coordination and dissemination of natural resource information and environmental information, and of data systems.

***Environmental Impact Assessment***

To minimise the environmental damage associated with human activity by improving environmental impact assessment processes, particularly their consistency, transparency and comprehensiveness.

***Changes to Government Institutions and Machinery***

To establish appropriate institutional arrangements for the inclusion of ESD principles in policy formulation and policy making processes

***Coastal Zone Management***

To develop comprehensive coastal zone policies which are consistent with ESD principles, protect and manage the coastline and beaches for the enjoyment of future generations, and ensure that coastal development is balanced, well planned and environmentally sensitive.

***Water Resource Management***

To develop and manage in an integrated way, the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater resources, and to develop mechanisms for water resource management which aim to maintain ecological systems while meeting economic, social and community needs.

***Waste Minimisation and Management***

To improve the efficiency with which resources are used and reduce the impact on the environment of waste disposal, and to improve the management of hazardous wastes, avoid their generation and address clean-up issues.

***Pricing and Taxation***

To develop pricing and taxation arrangements which reflect social and environmental costs of resource use, while taking account of the equity and economic implications of proposed actions.

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***Industry, Trade and Environment Policy***

To provide a government policy framework which supports the efficient and environmentally responsible development of the nation's resources; to pursue internationally, agreement on the incorporation of full environmental costs associated with production and use; and to maximise the ESD benefits of trade liberalisation.

***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples***

To ensure full participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in community progress towards ESD.

***Gender Issues***

To develop ESD-related policies, programs and actions which incorporate the particular concerns of women, while ensuring that actions to achieve ESD do not have inequitable effects on women.

***Public Health***

To establish an effective, cooperative and holistic approach to public health, which is based on a sound knowledge of environmental and health problems, their causes and the best means by which they can be resolved, and includes a focus on health and human and natural environments, and on the interrelationships and interactions which sustain or threaten them.

***Occupational Health and Safety***

To ensure that occupational health and safety (OHS) considerations are fully integrated into processes developed for the implementation of ESD

***Education and Training***

To increase awareness and application of ESD principles and approach in education and training policy and programs.

***Employment and Adjustment***

To ensure that equity implications of ESD actions, including those for employment and structural adjustment, are taken into account in implementation, monitoring and review of this Strategy Package, and where adjustment is necessary, it occurs in an equitable way.

***Australia's Overseas Aid Policy***

To build a portfolio of development cooperation activities that are environmentally sound and contribute to ecologically sustainable development.

***Population Issues***

To develop policies which seek to influence and respond to population change so as to advance Australia's well-being in relation to economic progress, ecological integrity, social justice and responsible international involvement.

***Research, Development and Demonstration***

To provide the knowledge, techniques and technologies needed to achieve the goals of ESD in all sectors, as well as in addressing intersectoral issues.

**Part 4 - Future Development of ESD in Australia - Challenges****Conflict Management**

To develop and use decision making processes which facilitate effective conflict management and dispute resolution, in the context of ESD issues

***Community Awareness, Education and Participation***

To ensure that the implementation and further development of this Strategy benefits from informed community participation, and that progress towards ecologically sustainable development is supported by community understanding and action.

***Monitoring and Review of the Strategy***

To ensure that the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development continues to be effective, focussed and relevant.

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