

STRATEGIC PLAN – REACH TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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SUSTAINABILITY-OUR KEY TO THE FUTURE

Leaders worldwide are discussing with their communities what being 'sustainable' means and how to achieve sustainability.

The term 'sustainability' means different things to different people. Some people describe it as a journey not a destination. It is a concept that will continue to be debated. It often seems easier to say what isn't sustainable than what is. One early and well-known definition of sustainable development is found in Gro Brundtland's 1987 Report, 'Our Common Future':

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

For more than 30 years, EPA Victoria has been at the international forefront of environment protection, working and often pioneering initiatives to change unsustainable practices. We lead and support those changes using a practical but sophisticated and enforceable statutory system that is supported by sound science.

Our environmental policies and standards, regulatory and enforcement practices, monitoring, auditing and reporting, all provide the community with assurance that the environment is being protected. By community we mean all dimensions of community – including individuals, neighbourhoods, business, government bodies,

community groups and others. EPA is accepted as an independent, credible environmental regulator which protects and improves the environment.

The community is indicating to us that it wants to accelerate the quest for a more sustainable society and that Victorians want EPA to provide continued strong leadership in the areas it is responsible for. This encourages EPA to further collaborate to share and grow information and knowledge, encourage a stronger environmental ethic and drive resource efficiency.

We believe that by working with others, we can leverage the value of our knowledge and statutory capacity to gain better environmental outcomes that go further towards achieving sustainability.

Our statutory capacity, knowledge, experience and valued relationships focused around environmental protection and improvement, are our point of difference and our offering to the community.

FACING THE CHALLENGE

To guide how we work in our community to become more sustainable we need to articulate our long term Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan sits within our overall planning framework (Appendix 1) and sets the direction and determines resourcing priorities for EPA for the next five to 10 years.

We have developed this Strategic Plan through extensive research and consultation involving both our people and our stakeholders. Our challenge is

to respond to the information and views gained through this process.

What our research tells us

Our research highlights a broad range of environmental issues in scale from local to global where people see a role for EPA. These include addressing:

- Non sustainable production and consumption activities and their effects on our natural resources and biodiversity;
- Global issues such as climate change, and ozone protection;
- Diffuse sources of pollution particularly in regard to water quality;
- Environmental issues stemming from urban development including those associated with our transport, energy usage and waste management practices; and
- The need to continue to develop our understanding of the environment, economy and society to better address existing and emerging issues.

Our research suggests a shift in social attitudes towards a greater acceptance of personal responsibility for environmental outcomes amongst a more knowledgeable and aware community. There were significant differences in understanding of the notion of sustainability, but clearly a lot more clarity of what is unsustainable.

What our stakeholders and our people are saying

Our people and our stakeholders identify a need for leadership on the environment agenda and a need

for EPA to clearly voice the nature of its role in such leadership. In particular they see:

- No one party can achieve environmental sustainability on behalf of others. EPA's role is to work with others to achieve environmental sustainability, in doing so, EPA must continue its historic leadership in environment protection underpinned through statute;
- EPA needs to be holistic/integrated in its approach to environmental management focussing on those issues which both matter to the community and which can lead to long lasting solutions;
- A strong role for EPA in helping to progress community interest and awareness into community action using its acknowledged strengths;
- A need for EPA to strengthen its presence through the media;
- EPA continuing its role in environmental assurance;
- A need for a stronger commitment to creativity, innovation and learning; and
- EPA to be an example of change towards sustainability.

With these things in mind, stakeholders also recognise that some of EPA's existing programs could benefit from a new or different focus and others could be scaled back.

There is a clear expectation for EPA to be operating as a regulator; in a manner that is transparent, fair and just; and as a leading voice on environmental matters.

What we need to do

In response to these views we need to adapt our current approach more towards collaboration and information sharing. There is a need for us to clearly express our role in contributing to environmental sustainability.

In doing so, we will maintain our existing environmental assurance role, but in a way that recognises the shift towards greater responsibility for the environment across the community.

We need to focus on where greatest environmental gain can be made and apply measures accordingly. And we need to pay closer attention to the impacts of consumption, as well as to production, to ensure greater resource efficiency.

Finally, we need to become more effective in our listening to, consulting with and learning from each other and our stakeholders. Through this we will better understand the needs in our community and work to overcome the barriers to a sustainable future.

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

(For definition of what we mean by these terms see appendix 1)

Vision

Together, as an informed community we imagine, plan for and commit to achieving a healthier environment, knowing that through our work, we can reach a sustainable future.

Mission

With all Victorians work to enable the achievement of a clean, safe and sustainable environment using our statutory capacities, knowledge, experience and continuing our valued relationships.

Values

The values that we at EPA hold are:

- Passion for the environment
- Sound science
- Respect for people
- Community focus
- Integrity
- Co-operation and openness
- Creativity and learning

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Drive resource efficiency for sustainability

As a community, by understanding life cycle impacts and using creativity and innovation, we will seek to reduce resources consumed by production processes and in the use of products and services to sustain natural resources for long-term environmental benefit.

Build an ethic of environmental responsibility

We need everyone in our community, including ourselves, to accept a shared responsibility and to adopt the necessary actions to care for and protect our environment. In all our programs we will adopt and encourage a culture of voluntary stewardship that goes beyond statutory compliance. The regulatory framework, and its enforcement in line

with community expectations, is an essential underpinning to support a broad ethic of environmental responsibility.

Share and grow information and knowledge

Information and knowledge help us understand and overcome barriers to sustainable behaviors and release the community's capacity to bring about better environmental outcomes.

EPA will continually listen to and learn from our community so the information and knowledge we share meets the community's needs.

EPA's own knowledge of environmental factors allows us to adopt evidence and risk-based decision-making using both sound science and understanding of social values.

Create lasting solutions through collaboration

The challenges faced by the community in protecting our environment are complex. By working together, both with our community and within our own organisation, we learn from each other, find creative and innovative solutions and gain strength from the diversity of our approaches. By working together, and building shared environmental values, more effective, lasting solutions will be achieved.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

In whole of organisational planning all of our activities, programs and projects will be focused towards the strategic objectives. A small part of EPA's resources will be allocated to the following key priority areas for actions to give more impetus towards our strategic objectives:

1. Using life-cycle approaches for greatest environmental gain;
2. Enhancing environmental assurance to the community;
3. Meeting community needs for useful environmental information and knowledge;
4. Strengthening relationships for lasting environmental outcomes;
5. Advocating and promoting actions for better environmental outcomes; and
6. Growing the capacity of our people to deliver our visions.

KEY TARGETS AND MEASURES

Key targets and measures define those outcomes which will deliver the Strategic Plan Objectives. We will determine key targets and measures for all our work through our internal planning and assessment processes.

Appendix 2 is the commencement of our process to develop measures from outcomes for all our activities to add value to achieving our strategic objectives.

Each priority area for action contributes to more than one strategic objective, recognising that one objective may predominate depending on the target and measure. The Executive has identified where we will focus attention to compliment and support our existing areas of activity (Appendix 3).

ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT

All organisations need the best internal management systems and approaches to deliver on

their vision and mission. EPA will continue to develop systems and approaches for good governance in the areas of financial management, resource prioritisation, auditing, ethical behaviour and staff development and, in particular, will develop enhanced governance tools in:

- Risk Management – Like all organisations, there are always more things that EPA *could* do than EPA will have the resources *to* do. We will therefore further develop our approaches to assessing priorities in terms of risk – starting always with environmental risk, but considering other forms of risk such as financial, community need, occupation health and safety, reputation, etc.
- Responsiveness to Community – EPA will enhance its approaches to understanding community need, working out how best to respond to those needs and seeking feedback on how effective EPA’s responses have been.

REVIEW AND RENEWAL

To develop this Strategic Plan we conducted a long series of in-depth conversations, interviews, workshops and surveys with our people and stakeholders. Some 200 external people took part with many representatives of various interested groups. This was not a one-off process and we have continued to engage with our people and our stakeholders to refine the Plan.

The Strategic Plan is a guiding document for all our activities. It is recognised however, that circumstances can change. We will review our performance against the plan every year and where

necessary adjustments will be made to keep relevant.

Our commitment is to regularly listen to our people and our stakeholders in the review and renewal of the plan as we continue to work towards creating a better environment for all Victorians.

APPENDIX 1 EPA PLANNING

The Purpose of a Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan sets the direction and determines the resourcing priorities for EPA for the next five to 10 years.

It is our compass for change and success. It points our way and is updated regularly as we learn and adapt to the changes we encounter in implementing the Plan.

The Strategic Plan provides the overarching framework for all EPA's planning which itself provides the context for EPA's year-to-year endeavours.

In whole of organisational planning all of our activities, programs and projects will be focused towards the strategic objectives. A small part of EPA's resources will be allocated to the key priority areas for actions to give more impetus towards our strategic objectives.

The Parts of the Strategic Plan

There are many possible descriptions and definitions of the components of strategic plans. Ours are as follows.

Our Vision describes what EPA aspires to achieve within the next five to 10 years. Our vision states our destination and a daily guiding image of success that speaks of our contribution to society.

Our Mission describes the essence of what we are trying to do. It also defines what differentiates us from others in the field.

Our Values are the things that we hold to be important in the way we go about our activities.

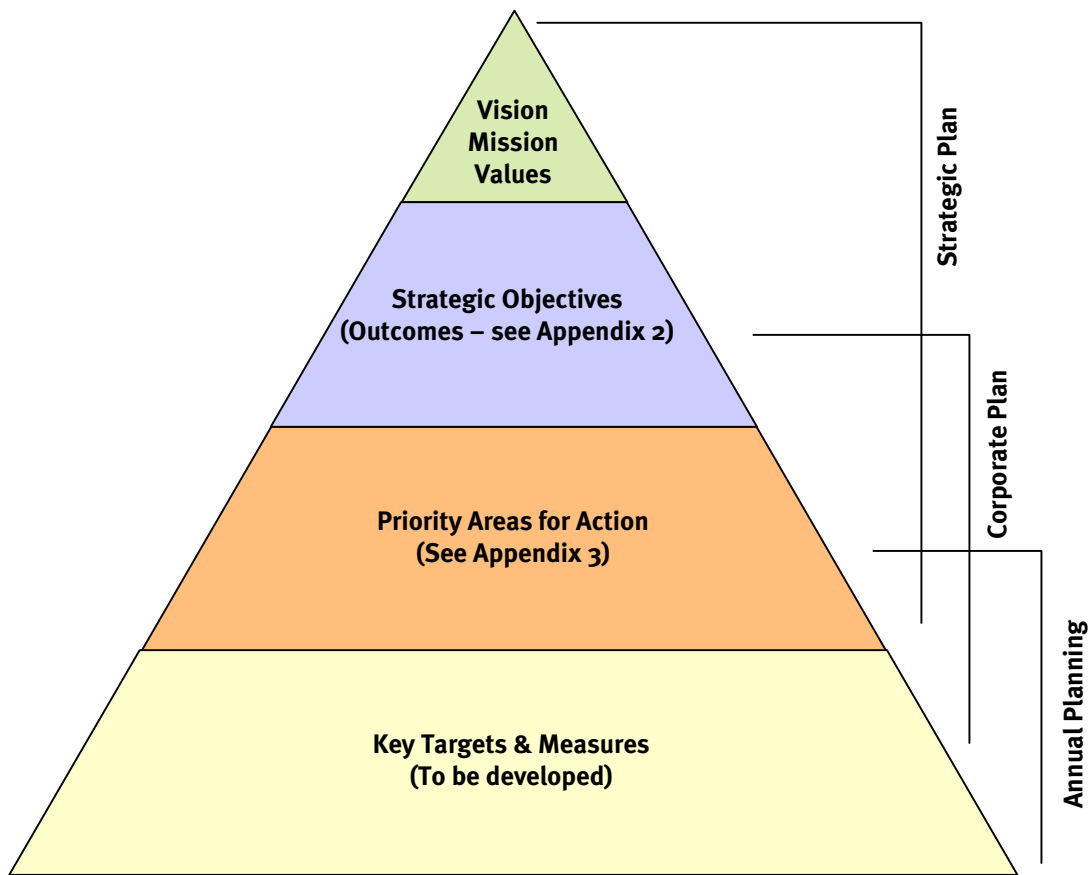
Our Strategic Objectives are broad statements of what EPA strives to achieve in the life of the plan. Whilst the objectives are written in a qualitative form, the accompanying outcomes (Appendix 2) will help us focus.

Priority Areas for Action are the key areas for initiating change that will move us towards reaching our objectives. A priority area for action should serve to assist the achievement of more than one strategic objective. These will be reviewed through the annual planning process and feed through to the corporate plan.

Our Key Targets and Measures are generally stated in annual plans and contain the quantifiable or demonstrable specifics of priorities. At the end of the planning cycle they define the outcomes that make our vision a reality; in the shorter term they provide indicators of progress.

STRATEGIC PLAN – REACH TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

EPA Planning Framework



APPENDIX 2 OUTCOMES FOR THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The accompanying outcomes were developed by the Executive to give guidance to what will be achieved to satisfy the Strategic Objectives. They will be refined as we apply them and we grow our knowledge.

Drive resource efficiency for sustainability

Outcomes:

1. Improved environmental quality in water, air, land and ground water.
2. Reduced waste volumes and impacts.
3. Demonstrated value of Life Cycle Approaches (LCA) in the general community, government and industry.
4. Reduced resource use.
5. Changes in behaviour that benefit the environment for:
 - Consumer goods;
 - Service providers; and
 - Government agencies.

Build an ethic of environmental responsibility

Outcomes:

1. Increased use of beyond compliance environmental management instruments, including:
 - **EPA** – covenants, EIPs, accredited licences, NEIPs; and
 - **Others** – EMS, ethical investments
2. Increased compliance with statutory requirements.

3. Increased understanding of community expectations of the environment.
4. Demonstrated positive impact by EPA programs and activities on community understanding, experience and behaviour on environmental issues.
5. Improved capture, analysis and use of information from the community and from existing operations and systems.
6. Continued public confidence in EPA decision-making, processes and enforcement.

Share and grow information and knowledge

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrated evidence that information and knowledge we produce meets identified needs of the community and is being used to assist in improving the environment.
2. Increased community confidence in the quality of the information we use and provide.
3. Increased development, communication, application and evaluation of new and existing forms of environmental information, knowledge and understanding.

Create lasting solutions through collaboration

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrated effective use of collaborative arrangements in EPA programs.
2. Demonstrated achievement of a better environmental outcome through the collaboration.

APPENDIX 3 PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

The following areas are where EPA will enhance and compliment our existing activities, programs and projects in seeking to achieve our strategic objectives.

1 Using life-cycle approaches (LCA) for greatest environmental gain, by:

1. Developing an understanding of and define the value of LCA.
2. Researching the usefulness and applications of LCA.
3. Pilot the use of LCA in key areas to identify where the greatest environmental gains can be made.
4. Embedding LCA into EPA programs based on lessons learnt.

2 Enhancing environmental assurance to the community, by:

1. Ensuring there is clear understanding within and outside the EPA of our role in environmental assurance.
2. Communication of EPA's enforcement policy, how it is implemented and its impacts.
3. Improved use of the environmental auditing system.
4. Ensuring environmental monitoring meets quality criteria for all internal and external clients.

5. Demonstrated alignment of EPA programs with areas of environmental risk and community concerns.

3 Meeting community needs for useful environmental information and knowledge, by:

1. Developing and deploying a systematic approach to the collection, analysis and use of information on community needs.
2. Trialing and assessing different approaches to gaining and sharing information and knowledge.
3. Shaping and delivering relevant information products for the community.

4 Strengthening relationships for lasting environmental outcomes, by:

1. Focusing our relationships with CMAs, local government, State and Federal government, industry and the general community and assessing the outcomes.
2. Using covenants, memorandums of understanding, secondments, partnership agreements and other collaborative arrangements to build relationships over the long term.

5 Advocating and promoting actions for better environmental outcomes, by:

1. Identifying and promoting debate and action on those areas where EPA is strongly positioned to effect change.
2. Advocating for improved environmental behaviour at the household level based on a strong understanding of LCA, social and environmental factors.

6 Growing the capacity of our people to deliver our vision, by:

1. Implementing a performance management process that delivers 'line of sight' from strategic objectives to individual performance plans.
2. Ensuring that staff have the necessary business systems and tools to support the achievement of the Strategic Objectives and Priority Areas for Action.
3. Identifying the capabilities that are crucial to the continued success of EPA and building these capabilities.