

Sustainability Victoria – Strategic Review

Submission from the Victorian Landcare Council

June 2011

Introduction

The Victorian Landcare Council (VLC) is the peak body representing the diverse community of landcare volunteers and coordinators across Victoria. It is an independent voice for all landcarers in the state and a “think tank” for landcare policy. One of the key objectives of the VLC is to advocate for landcare and encourage cooperation and partnerships across all government and non government organisations to achieve a sustainable landscape.

This is the basis for this submission.

It is our understanding that Sustainability Victoria (SV) is the government authority vested with the responsibility of fostering stewardship in the use of resources. Its Vision as published is...

“Victorians demonstrating sustainable resource use to support a thriving community and economy”.

It was formed in 2006 , an amalgamation of Ecocycle Vic and the Sustainability Energy Authority, and since that time it seems to have focused on improving recycling, waste management and the efficient use of resources, including (but predominantly) energy and waste. (*Sustainability Victoria Act 2005*)

In 2009/2010 its revenue was \$ 65 million, the result of levies on landfill and government funding.

The organisation is responsible for facilitating environmentally sustainable measures in all sectors of the Victorian economy.....including local government, business and households.

Although the Act setting up SV specifies “the use of resources” generally and refers to “environmental and sustainability outcomes”, it seems that the focus has been predominantly on urban household waste management and recycling and improving the efficiency of use of resources including energy and, to some extent, water.

Comments

Although the Act suggests the responsibilities of SV encompass an integrated approach to attaining environmental and sustainability outcomes across the Victorian community, this does not seem to be the case. From my reading of the Discussion Paper provided as background to the Strategic Review and the most recent Annual Report of SV, the

organisation appears to focus predominantly on urban resource use and even then only on a limited number of resources.

It is somewhat disappointing that the use of resources such as land especially and also water outside the metropolitan area, are not addressed. More significant however is the omission of the rural community from consideration when discussing “stewardship of Victoria's natural resources”.

The definition of “Victorian community” and “resource” need to be tightened in the SV documentation.

Who is the Victorian community? What resources are being referred to? Are they natural resources? Is agricultural land included here? What about biodiversity?

If the major activities of the organisation are urban recycling and efficient energy use, then this needs to be clearly specified so that the sustainable use of other resources across the entire community can be addressed through other programs.

One of the questions asked by the Strategic Review is “what is the potential for a sustainability agency to enhance Victoria's liveability”. It seems to the the VLC that a more integrated approach to managing all resources is essential and, how a sustainability agency links with other organisations to achieve this, needs to be clearly articulated.

Victoria will not be very liveable if....

open spaces are limited to pockets of grass between housing estates;
agricultural land is restricted to where the urban community doesn't want to live;
biodiversity is lost
and environmental flows in streams and rivers are the last to be budgeted for.

Even though greenhouse gas emissions and waste sent to landfill are decreasing per capita.

On the surface it would appear that landcarers have a lot to offer this review, however a closer inspection suggests that we are not considered a stakeholder.

