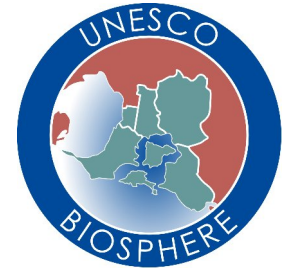


MORNINGTON PENINSULA & WESTERN PORT BIOSPHERE RESERVE FOUNDATION



"Showing the way to sustainability"

27th June 2008

Project Director
Land and Biodiversity White Paper Team
Department of Sustainability & Environment
P O Box 500
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Foundation recognises the complexity of the issues addressed in the Green Paper and commends the Government on the process and of seeking input from those with specialist knowledge, as well as the valuable and constructive input of the wider community.

The Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere Reserve is part of the global network of some 531 Biosphere Reserves in 105 countries. The network operates under the auspices of UNESCO's *Man and the Biosphere* program.

The Foundation does not operate as an activist or lobby organisation in the context of specific development or management proposals. Therefore, it does not seek to take up a partisan position on matters of contention within the community. However, The Foundation reserves the right to form a view as a matter of principle on issues consistent with its Charter and objectives to promote principles of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) and biodiversity conservation, especially with respect to the Biosphere Reserve's geographic region.

To ensure the future sustainability of our development it is essential that all sectors of the community acknowledge their share of responsibility.

Incentives will be needed to encourage business and individuals to invest in our natural assets, and greater emphasis has to be put on the value of these assets. Corporate and philanthropic involvement by way of support of projects or direct investment are options for consideration.

Education of the benefits through use of vegetation cover by primary produces on their properties to improve carbon capture in the soil, provide carbon offsets, improved production and the ability in some instances to diversify production to include farmed timber.

Plantings can help combat salinity, improve quality of water and biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

There is a need for the wider community to be educated and involved at a basic level so that they can in practical terms actively participate in water management. Business, industry and rural sector need encouragement and incentive, which can be in form of Government policy to better use water.

Recycling of water should where possible be adopted as a principle of sustainable development and redevelopment in commercial and domestic design. Industry and the rural sector should be educated and provided with incentives to enable them to retrofit to reduce consumption and recycle.

Care and re vegetation of riparian zones in the catchments is essential to conserve biodiversity in these regions and local communities with support and guidance from responsible land managers can assist with this process. The health of the catchments impact on the marine environment with the outflow from a number of rivers and creeks going directly into our marine parks.

An improved coordination of management of rivers and wetlands, by all sectors, will enhance biodiversity, reduce salinity and encourage greater community involvement in the conservation of this vital part of the natural environment.

The pressure on land use for urban development is critical, The speed at which this progress is advancing is impacting on all levels of government and the community and its ability to adequately adapt with the degree of flexibility required to meet the challenges.

Management of planning for freeway construction and the impact it has on wildlife and native vegetation should incorporate wider consultation with members of the local community who have local knowledge which should be sought more often as part of the pre planning process.

There are a number of areas currently under pressure from development, unless action is taken now to ensure that planning takes a whole of impact approach to development, the ability to conserve our biodiversity will be lost as the opportunity to create connectivity through the use of biolinks between areas with ecologically sustainable habitat stands still able to support biodiversity of both flora and fauna will be lost forever.

Creation of vegetation biolink corridors is but one part of the planning process that government at all levels, and developers, need to ensure are factored into the process so that they become mandatory requirements, recycling of water, alternative power supplies and more efficient use of these resources must become second nature. There are economic benefits for all in this approach. Sustainable development impacts on all aspects of our lifestyle from the type of car we drive, the way we heat our homes, materials we use to build them, the food we eat, water we drink, the impact our actions have on other members of the community and environment around us.

Victoria still has large areas of public land with good quality habitat, Government must lead the way to help ensure that these areas are preserved and their biodiversity conserved to enable these areas to continue to support the variety of indigenous plants and native wildlife that call these areas home.

Continued efforts must be directed at the removal of invasive weeds and control of feral animals which are a threat to the future of the protection and survival of native flora and fauna. Conservation of these habitats will maintain the corridors essential for native wildlife to move safely through these regions and thus expand their gene pools and enhance their survival.

Should these areas be lost or become small islands of vegetation the ability to reconnect and create corridors of vegetation and provide biodiversity of habitat for flora and fauna would be lost and their ecological viability threatened.

Further surveying and mapping of these areas should be encouraged with the results creating in a central database and added to existing data so as to provide a complete reference that can be utilised by all levels of government, environment and local community groups who are involved the management and protection of these natural assets.

Land managers should adopt a more coordinated approach by working with adjoining land holders, government and the community to expand the ideals of integrated management.

Aspects of the net gain approach to native vegetation should be reviewed as instances where the vegetation allocated for the offset is not in the same region can impact on the viability of habitat connectivity as isolated pockets are created.

Continued work with landholders to better handle and appreciate the value of their land should be encouraged and incentives provided to enable them to take advantage of programs that exist to assist them.

It is essential that the value of our indigenous plants and wildlife is not diminished, we should always strive to conserve and protect all species, whilst recognising that this may not always be possible, to do otherwise is to lower their value and importance. You cannot expect the community and business to invest to protect our endangered species if legislation diminishes their value.

Future generations are dependant upon the decisions we make and it is the responsibility of this generation through education and participation to ensure government, industry and the wider community understand our interdependence with every aspect of our environment. Our actions in everyday life impact on our family, neighbours and the environment we must understand this and educate to ensure that the future is protected.

Through this Green Paper we have an opportunity ensure a framework is put in place that will enable Government to show leadership through investment in long term plans and programs that are fully resourced, many being undertaken in partnership with business organisations and the community, to protect our endangered species, high quality habitats both marine and terrestrial, and further the use of strong science with systematic biodiversity monitoring programs, and integrated planning to help us come to terms and deal with the impacts of climate change and pave the way for a more sustainable future,

Yours sincerely



Cecelia Witton
Executive Officer

