

# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS AGENDA 21 PROGRAM WHICH POLITICIANS DESCRIBE AS A 'CONSPIRACY', BUT POLITICIANS GIVE VOTERS NO DEMOCRATIC CHOICE

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**Australian Government Admits on their Web Site that the Commonwealth made a “*strong national response*” to the “*obligations*” imposed by the UN to Introduce Agenda 21**

<http://www.environment.gov.au/node/13068>

*“Agenda 21 is an international framework agreement for pursuing global sustainable development that was endorsed by national governments, including the Australian Government, at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Australia's commitment to Agenda 21 is reflected in a strong national response to meet our obligations under this international agreement.”*

## **The Commonwealth has a Long History of Implementing Agenda 21**

You can see the government web site back in 2000

[https://web.archive.org/web/20000816084308/http://www.environment.gov.au/psg/igu/pubs/fs\\_agenda21.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20000816084308/http://www.environment.gov.au/psg/igu/pubs/fs_agenda21.html)

**Agenda 21 - Sustainable Development**  
*fact sheet*

In their submission to the Productivity Commission (encl) Environment Australia state:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20000819055445/http://www.indcom.gov.au/inquiry/esd/subs/subdr068.pdf>

The Commonwealth is currently assisting the uptake of Local Agenda 21 through:

- the development of a new step-by-step guide for Local Councils;
- including the development of Local Agenda 21 and local ESD as part of the work of Environment Resource Officers, which Environment Australia funds;
- recognising Local Agenda 21 plans in the Commonwealth's *Natural Heritage Trust: Guide to New Applications 1999-2000* as good examples of key strategic approaches for NHT projects (page 4).

The Department has employed a LA21 coordinator, while the Commonwealth supports the LA21 partnership through the funding of the LGASA's Environment Resource Officer. The partnership at present provides:

- networks for the rapid dissemination of information and for the sharing of experience,
- peer mechanisms to learn from the experience of other Councils;

- allows Councils to gain first hand experience in sustainable development issues; and
- will publish guidelines on Local Agenda 21 planning based on South Australia's experience.

<http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/ecologically-sustainable-development/report>  
<https://web.archive.org/web/20000914185457/http://www.indcom.gov.au/inquiry/esd/finalreport/chapter01.pdf>

## **Implementation of Ecologically Sustainable Development by Commonwealth Departments and Agencies**

### **A Productivity Commission Report**

#### **1.1 What is ESD?**

The maximisation of human welfare is the main objective underpinning sustainable development. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) articulated what has become a commonly used definition of sustainable development:

... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED 1987, p. 8)

The Agenda 21 agreement at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 provided further guidance on the broad scope of policy issues surrounding sustainable development. This agreement classified sustainable development activities into six broad themes:

- quality of life;
- efficient use of natural resources;
- protection of the global commons;
- management of human settlements;
- waste management; and
- sustainable economic growth (World Bank 1997a).

In Australia, governments have adopted the term 'ecologically sustainable development' to address these considerations. In 1992, in releasing the NSESD, the Council of Australian Governments considered that ESD:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20000914185514/http://www.indcom.gov.au/inquiry/esd/finalreport/chapter03.pdf>

At present the Commonwealth's sustainable development and environmental responsibilities are largely related to international commitments (box 3.1),

#### **Box 3.1 Australia's commitment to international sustainable development efforts**

Australia is a member of several international organisations that promote sustainable development (for example, the United Nations and World Trade Organization) and participates in a number of

significant multilateral environment agreements integral to sustainable development. Amongst these are the:

- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Kyoto Protocol for greenhouse gas emission reductions;
- Convention on Biological Diversity and the Biosafety Protocol;
- Prior Informed Consent Convention governing trade in hazardous chemicals;
- Montreal Protocol on ozone depleting substances; and
- Basel Convention on transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

In view of the increased profile of international environmental and sustainable development issues, Australia has also appointed an Ambassador for the Environment to represent Australian interests internationally.

Source: DFAT (sub. 37).

### **Commonwealth's role in ESD implementation by other governments**

All governments are responsible for the implementation of ESD principles. As the national government, the Commonwealth has an added responsibility to provide leadership to other governments in the implementation of ESD principles by requiring its own agencies to adopt such principles. In doing so, the Commonwealth can demonstrate processes that work effectively, facilitate application and, in some cases, provide incentives for the adoption of ESD principles.

There are examples where institutional and policy frameworks for local government have changed to incorporate ESD principles. In New South Wales, for example, the *Local Government Amendment (Ecologically Sustainable Development) Act 1997* includes provisions relating to ESD principles. Among other things, it expressly requires local councils, councillors and council employees to have regard to ESD principles.

So far Australian governments have implemented several initiatives designed to improve the coordination of decision making processes within and between different levels of government. The Commonwealth is prominent in these initiatives. The effect of such initiatives is to reduce the possibility of duplicating policy decisions, promote consistent application of ESD principles (where relevant and appropriate) and eliminate inconsistent decision making processes. To date such initiatives include:

- the IGAE;
- the NSESD;
- ministerial councils;
- statutory authorities (with ESD objectives enshrined in their legislation);
- joint agency ventures; and
- regional organisations.

### **Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment**

The IGAE was signed by the Commonwealth, States and Territories and a representative of local government in 1992. It aims to facilitate a coordinated approach to the environment. The agreement also provides a mechanism to:

- define the roles of each level of government;
- reduce intergovernmental environmental disputes;
- provide greater certainty in government and business decision making; and
- provide better environmental protection (COAG 1992).