

Shifting towards sustainability

Six insights into successful
organisational change for sustainability



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Welcome

This booklet was produced following an ARIES research project 'Shifting towards sustainability: An Action Research project on sustainability practices and organisational change'.

This twelve month research project sought to stimulate organisational change for sustainability through education. Ten major Australian organisations each nominated a participant for the project and the participants successfully used new learning approaches to build their capacity to achieve change.

Who is it for?

This booklet is designed for anyone involved in making change for sustainability. This includes sustainability practitioners, human resource specialists, strategic planners and managers and executive level staff in all industry sectors, including business, government and not-for-profit organisations.

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is not a 'steps to sustainability', as change for sustainability is not a linear process, nor is it a technical manual on 'how to be sustainable'. Its main aim is to inspire readers to look at sustainability using a new way of thinking - an Education for Sustainability approach. This approach will help not only individuals but whole organisations to think differently about what they can do to start to build the capabilities and capacities needed to create a more sustainable world.

As a result of this project, many insights into change were gained by the ten participating organisations, six of which are presented here in an easy to use format. Each insight is discussed in detail, outlining why it is important, how it can be used and practical ideas on how to incorporate it into an organisation. Examples have been used throughout the booklet to illustrate how these new ways of thinking have been used in practice.

What can you learn?

The research found that being involved in the project has changed the way participants approach change and education as a tool for change. Readers will be able to benefit from their stories about the process of change, the outcomes and their six insights and examples. These have been provided in this booklet to help change agents think critically how they achieve organisational change for sustainability.

“...the process helps people think through the implications of their choices and behaviours – the risks and opportunities of current behaviours in relation to the goal of sustainability. It also means reflecting about ourselves, about others we interact with and the dynamics of groups in which we participate. The reflective thinking... leads to better decision-making as it makes one focus on why we do things, helps question our assumptions, preconceptions and may actually lead to a shift in paradigm or mindset”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

Contents

Project information	1
Insight 1:	<i>Adopt a clear, shared vision for the future</i> 7
Insight 2:	<i>Build teams, not just champions</i> 13
Insight 3:	<i>Use critical thinking and reflection</i> 19
Insight 4:	<i>Go beyond stakeholder engagement</i> 25
Insight 5:	<i>Adopt a systemic approach</i> 31
Insight 6:	<i>Move beyond expecting a linear path to change</i> 37
In summary	43
Additional information	45

The ten organisations who are sharing their experiences in this booklet are:



Amcor Australasia



BHP Billiton



Department of the Environment and Heritage



National Australia Bank



Parramatta City Council



Toyota Australia



Visy Industries



Wesley Mission Sydney



Westpac Banking Corporation



Yarra Valley Water



Project information

Who was involved?

Ten major corporate and government organisations were involved in this groundbreaking research project which aimed to make change towards sustainability through education. All the organisations currently use various approaches to sustainability performance improvement such as; implementing a sustainability policy and procedures; using an Environmental Management System; publicly reporting on sustainability performance; creating learning environments for staff; and incorporating sustainability measures into staff and supplier performance.

The project was led by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES) and funded by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH). The project used a change process of Action Research with an Education for Sustainability framework.

What did they do?

Each participant identified a specific change action that would assist in realigning their organisation towards sustainability. The project process then built their capacity to reflect critically about sustainability and about change within their organisation. This enabled them to develop effective strategies to embed the change. The research studied the effectiveness

of this process in achieving change. More information about the project process can be found in the *Additional information* section at the end of this booklet.

What did they achieve?

The project helped the participants make change in their organisations and had the following impacts:

- ◆ The organisations achieved specific outcomes for sustainability (for more details see the case studies documented throughout this booklet);
- ◆ The participants gained key insights into organisational change. Six of these insights form the basis for this document;
- ◆ Some change actions were embedded in the organisations and the skills and learnings developed were transferred to others;
- ◆ A strong peer group of sustainability practitioners was formed which resulted in formal and informal partnerships. The participants agreed to continue to support each other in the future; and
- ◆ The outcomes and insights can now be used as tools for action for change in other organisations.

What did they do differently?

The ten organisations previously took an Education about Sustainability approach. This involved building knowledge and awareness using internal communications and training programs about ‘what sustainability is’ and ‘how to be sustainable’.

In this project they used an Education for Sustainability approach. This was used to develop a broader, collective vision for their organisation and map out effective steps to achieve this vision. It went beyond developing basic knowledge and capacity in sustainability and resulted in specific change actions.

The participants realised they needed to more deeply understand the barriers and limitations to change. Deeper understanding goes beyond narrow definitions of organisational values, the standard stakeholder analysis exercise or the traditional linear approaches to change towards sustainability. These do not challenge the underlying culture and therefore have limited influence on organisational sustainability.

The organisations used envisioning and a critically reflective, systemic and adaptive process to frame and implement a change action for sustainability. Participants built their capacity to engage with internal and external stakeholders which helped embed the change.

Two complementary guiding approaches underpinned the project. They were Education for Sustainability and Action Research (see also the Glossary in the *Additional information* section).

Education for Sustainability

Education for Sustainability is an ongoing learning process which actively involves multiple stakeholders in change to achieve sustainability. It is sometimes also called Learning for Sustainability or Education for Sustainable Development and involves five key components:

- ◆ Visioning (imagining a better future);
- ◆ Critical thinking and reflection;
- ◆ Participation in decision making;
- ◆ Partnerships; and
- ◆ Systemic thinking.

These are not new concepts. Change in organisations always needs participation, collaboration and to have an end goal. It requires a holistic approach and a clear understanding of how people currently live and work and why they behave as they do.

However, bundled together under the umbrella of Education for Sustainability, the concepts can help people make informed decisions and create ways to work towards a more sustainable world. By going beyond individual behavioural change, Education for Sustainability seeks to engage and empower people to implement systemic changes.

Various learning approaches can be used to explore the broad sustainability agenda. The project used mentoring and facilitation (see Glossary in the *Additional information* section) as part of the Action Research process. These enabled participants to reflect critically on their experiences, learn how to make change and take action.

Action Research

Action Research differs from other types of research in that its end goal is action and change, not just knowledge generation. It also differs in that the process is carried out by the organisations themselves, rather than outsiders, which builds capacity internally.

Action Research has a focus on critical enquiry and continuous self-evaluation and is often represented as a four-phase cyclical process of critical enquiry; plan-act-observe-critically reflect. Action Research requires you to go deeper to discover the root cause of why change does and does not work, identify the biases and motivations of yourself and others and make adjustments along the way. It differs considerably from usual 'change management' approaches as it aims not just to improve, but to innovate practice.

Each participant became an 'Action Researcher' and developed and implemented a specific change action plan. The plans varied in nature but all were designed to assess and improve the effectiveness of sustainability practices and processes as drivers for internal change and, in some cases, external change too.

What can you learn?

Being involved in the project has changed the way participants approach change and education as a tool for change. You can benefit from their stories about the process of change, the outcomes and their six insights and examples. These have been provided in this booklet to help you achieve organisational change for sustainability.

"The process of implementing sustainability into an organisation is not a well known path. It is not something we can follow from a text book or copy from another organisation. Each place is unique and requires us to do new things, reflect and adjust".

Project participant in Journal Summary

“I am now a different person, better skilled to facilitating change for sustainability having learnt about Education for Sustainability and Action Learning. I see this methodology as critical building blocks for the knowledge skill set of all sustainability practitioners and arguable any change agent”.

Project Participant in Journal Summary

Six insights

into organisational change for
sustainability





1 Adopt a clear, shared vision for the future

Why is a shared vision important?

Visioning is one of the key components in Education for Sustainability and is a crucial starting point for any change.

Typically, change towards sustainability in the past has involved staff being ‘told’ what the vision is and ‘how’ to get there. This means they don’t take ownership of the change process and also feel extremely disempowered. Organisations are often left wondering why change failed to achieve the intended outcomes, forgetting, or paying lip service to, their biggest asset and source of ideas - staff.

A more positive, proactive approach is to actively engage a range of stakeholders to ‘imagine a better future’ and develop a clear, shared vision (whether at a project or organisational level) which will inspire and motivate them in making change towards sustainability.

So how do you go about visioning?

Visioning is a highly creative process which opens up possibilities. Rather than taking a negative ‘problem solving’ approach to sustainability, visioning looks at ‘what can be’ rather than ‘what is’. This can be quite confronting as people are given ‘permission’ to look outside the square and think differently about what kind of future they want to live and work in.

Visioning also needs people to focus on their biases; what informed their vision and why they do things in certain ways. This increases their awareness that others may have a different view of the future than they do. Acknowledgement of different perspectives helps build the shared vision and gets the all important ‘buy-in’ necessary.

Visioning tools such as facilitated workshops, drawing, mapping, group discussions, scenario planning and reflective practice can help to start building a vision for what a sustainable future should look and feel like.

“It’s harder to move towards a goal when people haven’t been provided with an opportunity to take time out to envision what sustainability means to them separately (as individuals) and together (as a team or organisation)”.

Project participant in Journal Summary



“The process of Education for Sustainability has helped me to be more consciously aware of the value of shared visioning. The act of sharing produces a better result. It produces a concept/outcome, which is better understood and owned by participants in the development process”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

What happened in this project?

At the start of the project, participants drew a vision for their sustainable organisation and identified key words associated with it. They reflected on what had informed their vision and started to see many links between their organisations and others which they had not considered previously. This was a springboard for the partnering and peer support which later took place.

All organisations recognised that visioning is an important starting point for sustainability and that it should engage key stakeholders. If done without consultation it is likely to have less impact because there is no joint commitment to what a sustainable future should look like.

They also agreed that once the vision is defined, a path needs to be built to the vision, using existing processes and practices. This gives sustainability credibility and validity and helps understand how a change in one area (or part of the 'system') may have knock on effects in other areas.

Examples of how organisations used visioning

Case study 1: Amcor Australasia

Amcor Australasia wanted to implement Positive Performance Indicators (PPIs) for health, safety and environment. Systemic thinking and a deeper understanding of the organisation's structure and hierarchy led to the creation of a cross departmental stakeholder team.

The team formulated a vision for PPIs and used critical thinking and reflection to understand the levers to change. PPIs were trialed at pilot sites and feedback was incorporated into the final PPI set, implemented in May 2006. The PPIs were then built into a web based balanced scorecard for a three month pilot starting in September 2006.

A network of champions formed in tandem with the project which assisted in developing an ongoing, more systemic change approach across the organisation.

Amcor Australasia used: Visioning, critical thinking and reflection, systemic thinking and participation

"I approach change differently since starting this project. I now recognise the importance of focusing on the goal, not problem solving. 'Fixing something' is past focused, rather than creating something we truly want".

Project participant in Journal Summary

"Visioning is only productive if you backfill in the steps needed to get there".

Project participant in Mentoring Session



"With visioning there needs to be a clear pathway before you can do it. Often need the person to change their skill set because this determines whether they can find the pathway".

Project participant in Journal Summary

Case study 2: National Australia Bank (NAB)

NAB planned to establish a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Procurement Policy and commence development of supporting procedures as a starting point for a more sustainable supply chain.

Critical thinking and reflection led to a clear understanding of the structural and hierarchical issues for the adoption of a group-wide policy. This process was iterative and the specific levers for change were identified and addressed.

A shared vision for a sustainable supply chain was created with procurement staff and an internal sustainability practitioners' network was formed as a side outcome of the project.

NAB used: Visioning, participation, critical thinking and reflection

“The Education for Sustainability processes and tools make one reflect that we seldom stop long enough to truly use our imagination to envision a better world or different ways to do things”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

How other companies have developed visions

Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a healthcare company and a world leader in diabetes care. It sees sustainability as ‘preserving the planet while improving the quality of life for its current and future inhabitants’.

Source:

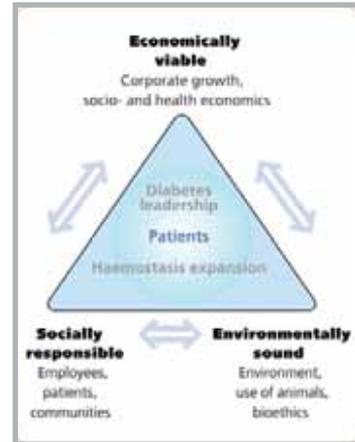
www.novonordisk.com/sustainability/sustainability_in_short/default.asp

ABN AMRO

ABN AMRO is an international bank and has a sustainability definition: ‘To live our Corporate Values and Business Principles and to meet the needs of the organisation and our stakeholders, thus seeking to protect, sustain and enhance human, natural and financial capital needed in the future’.

Source:

www.abnamro.com/com/about/sr2005en.pdf



What you can do:

- ◆ Draw your own vision for your organisation. Think about what formed your vision. Think about your own biases and try to understand how they may have influenced your vision
- ◆ Plan visioning and futures activities with a group of key stakeholders. Promote creative thinking. Give the individuals time to think about their vision for a sustainable organisation and how their own actions can shape this. Create a supportive, inclusive environment and get the group to share their individual visions to build a shared vision
- ◆ Make the link between the vision and the present situation using a change plan, incorporating input from as many people as possible. Explain to people that this is a forward looking exercise not a problem solving one
- ◆ Build the steps needed to get to the vision into the strategic planning process. Include timelines and targets and monitor your progress but allow for some flexibility in your plans, just in case things don't turn out as you expect! Get to the bottom of what can slow down or speed up change
- ◆ Keep focused on the vision and what you're trying to achieve. This will help keep people motivated on the end point rather than bogged down when barriers to change occur
- ◆ Read about visioning to get yourself and others inspired:

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/about/keycomps_future.htm

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/links/envision.htm

It is important to remember "that such a change process is not about 'winning the battle', but being around long enough to 'win the war'".

Project participant in Journal Summary



2 Build teams, not just champions

Do you have a specialist area 'looking at' sustainability?

Relying on single change champions or on one department to build a vision or make effective, long lasting change for sustainability is no longer good enough. A team based approach is vital to get an organisation-wide buy-in to sustainability. Cross departmental groups with clear responsibilities and accountabilities should be set up to inform a more holistic approach to change and build broader organisational capacity for sustainability. These groups should include staff at all levels so they can participate and help with setting the agenda and driving successful change.

Are your champions overwhelmed?

As a change champion it is easy to feel overwhelmed or disheartened about the challenges of sustainability. Champions need more support or they will move on. They need support from both external and internal sources. In this project, mentoring provided a 'safe' environment for critical thinking and reflection to work through the challenges to change. In addition, a strong peer group formed which helped provide clarity of thought and introduce participants to other ideas about change.

"During the project, I learnt that a few management champions are not enough to maintain organisational impetus to implement change for sustainability".

Project participant in Journal Summary



"The one on one mentoring...was also valuable. It was a safe place to work through issues and have someone ask at times critical and valuable questions. The mentoring meetings ensured there was time given to reflection and to discuss with someone outside the situation in a trusted environment".

Project participant in Journal Summary

How do you set up these teams?

Building participation across your organisation may take time but is well worth the investment. Once gained, participation becomes part of organisational culture and can be used over and over again to make change. To establish cross departmental teams for sustainability you need to remember the steps which lead to participation in decision making:

1. **Engagement.** Raise awareness of sustainability in a positive or negative way and create a 'desire' to change;
2. **Empowerment.** Build skills for the 'ability' to change and give staff 'permission' to assist with change; and
3. **Participation.** Encourage staff to get involved and give input which will 'motivate' them to take action.

These are equally important and change will be more embedded if you can achieve all three.



"Participation in decision making takes time but achieves agreement – once agreement is gained, the impact of a large organisation can be huge".

Project participant in Journal Summary

Examples of how organisations built teams for change

Case study 3: Parramatta City Council

A 'Sustainability Health Check' questionnaire was developed in conjunction with other councils and the Local Government Managers Association. The aim was to use the process of completing the checklist to engage staff and provide a mechanism for creating change within the organisation. Critical thinking and reflection identified that this process would not create high levels of participation or buy-in for sustainability. Instead, small focus groups were formed to facilitate an inclusive envisioning process.

In addition to creating a vision for a sustainable Council, these cross departmental groups also used critical thinking and reflection to identify challenges and constraints to change. The group process led to shared learning and capacity building within Council staff.

Parramatta City Council used: Participation, visioning, critical thinking and reflection and systemic thinking

Information sharing is important too

As well as collaborative decision making, participation encourages the sharing of information and prevents knowledge being withheld and used as a source of power. Of course, some information may be sensitive but decision makers need to have the same access to information and knowledge if they are to map out the route to the vision.

Sustainability indicators also need to be built into performance measures at an individual and team level. This will reward people for taking action and indicate that the organisation is serious about sustainability.

Examples of how organisations addressed information sharing

Case study 4: Yarra Valley Water

Yarra Valley Water established a ‘Sustainability Circle’ to promote the integration of environmental sustainability into the business. It was made up of executive team members and specific internal and external knowledge experts.

The staff members in the ‘Circle’ used critical thinking and reflection to examine how change for sustainability currently occurred. They concluded that information and knowledge sharing were vital for change for sustainability and were just as important levers to change as the alignment of personal and organisational values around sustainability. This understanding drove the formulation of a change model about values and knowledge.

Various methods were used to support knowledge sharing at Yarra Valley Water and change projects were started in teams across functional work groups. Key outcomes were the production of a Greenhouse Gas reduction strategy and the improvement in the provision of alternative, more sustainable, water and sewerage services.

Yarra Valley Water used: Participation, critical thinking and reflection and systemic thinking

How other organisations are building teams

Patagonia



Patagonia is an outdoor adventure clothing company that differentiates itself with an environmental focus.

In 2001 it decided to switch to using organic cotton.

“Before Patagonia made the switch to organics, the company purchased cotton from a broker. Departments went about their everyday business without much concern about how the cotton was produced. Once they decided to switch to organic cotton, however, Patagonia had to initiate an exhaustive review of the production process that led back through the broker to the distributors, cotton ginners and eventually to the farmers themselves. This required the involvement of numerous departments and functions. The result was the creation of a ‘cotton education’ team. Many units were involved with the team. The purpose of the team was to educate every department and individual within the company about what the shift to organics meant – from why the changes were being made to what the implications were for the business. Almost every unit, including fabric, production, accounting, sales and marketing eventually altered their operations because the shift to organics required all sorts of changes, including new pricing structures and marketing strategies”.

Source:

Doppelt, B. (2003) *Leading change towards sustainability: a change management guide for government, business and civil society*

See also:

<http://www.patagonia.com/web/us/patagonia.go?assetid=2077>

What you can do:

- ◆ Think about whether and how your organisation encourages people to get involved in decision making. Try and discover why some people want to get involved and others don't and what can build their involvement
- ◆ Try and map out what your organisation needs to do to build the steps to participation (looking at engagement and empowerment first) and formulate a plan of action and reward structure to achieve this
- ◆ Form a cross functional sustainability team as part of a trial project and use it to see what is needed for participation to be successful
- ◆ Ensure all project groups have representatives from different departments in some capacity (whether as steering committee members, stakeholders or reviewers)
- ◆ Read about participation in decision making:

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/about/keycomps_participation.htm

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/links/participate.htm



3 Use critical thinking and reflection

Don't we already think critically?

The answer is 'yes', sometimes too critically. But this is not what 'critical thinking' and 'reflection' are about. Critical thinking is about identifying the various elements of a change situation (especially the often unsaid bits such as power structures and personal bias), reflecting on why things do and don't work and then using this deeper knowledge to build a path to your vision. A bit like doing a puzzle.

Often, the elements of the change situation are called 'barriers' but really they should be seen as 'levers' to change ie. pieces of the puzzle, not complete stopping points. If you can understand the effect levers such as leadership, power, politics, hierarchy, structure, information flows and personal bias have on change, you can use critical thinking to develop practical steps to change using the levers.

Critical thinking and reflection are great tools to use during change. They are not for use only at the end of a project, during the post implementation review. Critical thinking should to be used almost constantly, at least at every decision point.



"... critical thinking and reflection takes effort. I find that I had to be disciplined to actually record my thoughts, to spend time to ask the questions that I did not intuitively ask. And it is only when I did this that I found an awareness that I had not previously experienced".

Project participant in Journal Summary

So, how did the participants improve their thinking skills?

Critical thinking starts with the individual and keeping a regular journal can help you reflect on the actions you took and what you're planning to do. To support the critical thinking process in this project, all participants kept a journal to regularly record their thoughts and ideas. They reviewed their 'journey' at the end of the project and produced a summary of their journal. Some participants are continuing to keep a journal.

Critical thinking and reflection helped all the participants to more clearly understand the levers to change for sustainability. With this understanding, they were able to adjust their plans accordingly and still work towards achieving their objectives. This adjustment creates an iterative process of change of 'plan-do-observe-critically reflect'. This cyclical approach using deep reflective practice was a cornerstone of many projects. Such practice has rarely been used before in these types of organisations to achieve change towards sustainability.

However, critical thinking is at its most potent when used with others and is invaluable in a group context.

Examples of how organisations used critical thinking and reflection

Case study 5: Wesley Mission Sydney

Wesley Mission Sydney already had a small group of champions trying to make change for sustainability. However, they were finding it hard to build staff buy-in and support.

The group used critical thinking and reflection to gain a deeper understanding of the internal levers for staff engagement with sustainability. Certain staff were identified as being key levers for change, most notably at senior management level.

Wesley Mission Sydney then used both external

"Undertaking critical thinking, particularly through the discipline of documenting this in a journal has delivered the largest learning for me. Some are new, and some are just revisiting theory that is familiar to me, but critically, the learning comes from actually the act of experiential practice. From my experience when you live an example it resonates in every living cell and provides a learning experience significantly deeper than reading about a theory".

Project participant in Journal Summary



sustainability advocates and improved information flows to raise awareness about sustainability. This, in combination with positive messages from a new CEO, led to senior managers embracing sustainability as an important organisational value.

This created commitment to increase resources for change towards sustainability. In addition, sustainability performance planning and measures have been built into overall business planning.

Wesley Mission Sydney used: Critical thinking and reflection, systemic thinking, visioning and partnering

Case study 6: Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac)

A comprehensive sustainable supply chain management system was rolled out across the procurement area of Westpac. This aimed to help procurement staff build sustainability performance improvements into supplier contracts.

However, the system was underutilised. Critical thinking and reflection led to better identification of the levers to support changed actions of staff and suppliers, especially to change the perception that extra resources were required for the engagement of suppliers in the process.

Critical thinking and reflection also highlighted that the link between Westpac's commitment to sustainability and the role of procurement needed to be strengthened by developing clear drivers for the engagement of suppliers.

Benchmarking of global best practice with senior management enabled a top down approach to define the vision for sustainable supply chain management. From this, clear drivers were agreed, which allowed for the identification of risks and the development of implementation strategies.

This has created better use of resources and refinement of the sustainable supply chain system to support more targeted and efficient processes for sustainability performance improvement.

Westpac used: Critical thinking and reflection, visioning and systemic thinking

"...the process helps people think through the implications of their choices and behaviours – the risks and opportunities of current behaviours in relation to the goal of sustainability. It also means reflecting about ourselves, about others we interact with and the dynamics of groups in which we participate. The reflective thinking... leads to better decision-making as it makes one focus on why we do things, helps question our assumptions, preconceptions and may actually lead to a shift in paradigm or mindset".

Project participant in Journal Summary

How other organisations use critical thinking

Interface Inc.

Interface is a global leader in the carpet industry. As part of its vision for a sustainable future Interface developed ‘Mission Zero’ which aims to ‘eliminate any negative impact our company may have on the environment by the year 2020’.

Interface’s vision was driven initially by its CEO but in order to make such transformational change all staff needed to understand and engage with this vision. Interface uses critical thinking and reflection in a continuous improvement cycle to empower staff to generate ideas about how to achieve its vision.

By critically thinking about the levers to change for sustainability, Interface has defined key focus areas of improvement including zero waste, renewable energy and closed-loop recycling and aims to completely sever its links with the biosphere and lithosphere by 2020.

Interface uses a process called QUEST (Quality Using Employee Suggestions and Teamwork) to achieve its Zero Waste target. The aim is to take many approaches, critically reflect on the outcomes and continuously make change.

Adapted from:

www.interfacesustainability.com

and

Anderson, R. (2003) Introduction: Envisioning the prototypical company of the 21st century in Waage, S. (Ed) Ants, Galileo, & Gandhi: Designing the Future of Business through Nature, Genius and Compassion

mission



Mission Zero:

our promise is to eliminate any negative impact our company may have on the environment by the year 2020.

What you can do:

- ◆ Start a journal to record your thoughts and reflect on your actions. Begin by asking yourself a question such as ‘what do I think about sustainability?’ or ‘what can I do to improve sustainability?’ Then ask the question ‘why?’ you wrote what you did – try to deconstruct your responses by delving down below the surface and being truthful
- ◆ Write regularly and paste in news items, cartoons and quotes – anything which has sparked your interest, both positively and negatively. Revisit your journal entries every six months to see how your thinking has developed and how your awareness of yourself and others has changed
- ◆ Seek out a mentor (most likely external to your organisation) to support your reflective practice. Use them to bounce ideas off rather than looking to them for answers – you have all of these – you just have to ask yourself the right questions
- ◆ Most importantly, use critical thinking and reflection in teams at work to identify levers for change for sustainability. Make sure everyone is on the same page about what critical thinking and reflection is and how they contribute to change. Consider using a thinking framework eg. Edward de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats (*de Bono, E. (2000) Six Thinking Hats, revised edition*), to provide a structure for critical thinking and help diffuse some of the inherent biases people bring to discussions
- ◆ Use critical thinking and reflection to boost creativity and put the fun back into complex decision making
- ◆ Read more about critical thinking:
 - www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/about/keycomps_critical.htm
 - www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/links/envision.htm#critical



4 Go beyond stakeholder engagement

But we already have a stakeholder process!

Many organisations respond to sustainability by identifying and ‘engaging’ their stakeholders. This process takes a significant investment of time and resources but shouldn’t be seen as a static exercise. Ask yourself the question: ‘Why do we do stakeholder engagement, is it to minimise the risk to our business or are we really asking others for their input so we can collectively make change for sustainability?’

To really make change for sustainability, organisations need to work more proactively with a variety of other organisations and share information, issues and practices until a ‘tipping point’ for sustainability is reached. This requires rethinking the traditional stakeholder engagement approach. Most importantly, building cross sectoral partnerships between industry, government and not-for-profits helps better understand different perspectives for sustainability and informs a shared vision for a sustainable future.

How were partnerships and networks used?

Partnering and networking became increasingly important as the project progressed. The participants realised they all had similar goals, ultimately to build a more sustainable world, and that working together as a group could help to better understand issues, levers for change and map out the way forward.

“Partnerships demonstrate the reality of synergy. The success of a partnership does not come from likeminded individuals working together; it demands that diversity be embraced to get the right outcome. It requires people to reassess their values and pride issues because they are often working alongside people or in ways they never would in their normal approach”.

Project participant in Journal Summary



“It is critical to work together in forming common goals. Sustainability crosses many boundaries and I see partnerships as a potential to achieve results not previously considered”.

Project participant in Feedback Form from Workshop

The participants explored ways to partner with each other and saw many benefits in partnering such as:

- ◆ Learning from others, especially learning that people think differently and that there is power in tapping into this diversity;
- ◆ Realising that combinations of organisations can be powerful if a focus around a common goal is developed;
- ◆ Using a more holistic approach to sustainability, especially where horizontal and vertical partnering (via supply chain) occurs; and
- ◆ Driving a wide variety of outcomes eg. improved sustainability plans and strategies leading to better results, or a more active group advocacy or change role.



Examples of how organisations used partnering

Case study 7: Informal partnership to support change

Toyota Australia aimed to increase awareness about sustainability amongst staff as a starting point for making change towards sustainability.

Initially, Toyota Australia developed a training program to achieve this. However, a process of critical thinking and reflection by the environmental team highlighted that the program would not improve sustainability performance and the program was postponed.

Instead, Toyota Australia worked in partnership with another participant, Yarra Valley Water, to develop measures to first determine staff awareness levels. The two organisations worked together to better understand the drivers for staff awareness and develop practical measures to assess and track staff awareness levels.

Rather than running the training program, staff were

surveyed about their awareness of sustainability. In response to learning needs identified via the survey, a program was run to engage staff in reducing greenhouse emissions. This was successful in achieving reductions but less successful in building support for sustainability.

Further critical thinking shifted the focus to implementing an Environmental Management System across the organisation to better highlight staff learning needs and build participation levels.

Toyota Australia used: Partnering, critical thinking and reflection, participation and systemic thinking

Case study 8: Formal partnership to support change

Both NAB and Westpac found common interests during the project in wanting to better link their corporate sustainability strategy with their procurement policy and procedures.

Subsequently ANZ, NAB and Westpac initiated plans to set up a supply chain working party with other financial organisations under the auspices of the Australasian Group of the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative.

How other organisations use partnering

SC Johnson

SC Johnson is a household products company and is committed to sustainability by creating value for those most in need of support around the world.

SC Johnson partnered with Cornell University, the University of North Carolina, the University of Michigan, The World Resources Institute and The Johnson Foundation to develop a 'Base of the Pyramid' (BOP) Protocol which informs its sustainability strategy. This was also supported financially by DuPont, Hewlett-Packard and Tetra Pak.

This partnership aims to link the private sector and local communities to build economic, social and environmental value for the poorest section of the global society.

The BOP Protocol defines three key phases to generate value for all stakeholders as follows:

- ◆ Opening up – facilitating two-way stakeholder dialogue to understand the local environment and generate ideas for change;
- ◆ Building the ecosystem – generating a network of partnerships among multinational corporations and local individuals and organisations that support change for sustainability and win-win strategies; and
- ◆ Enterprise creation – piloting a test, evaluating results and then further launching change initiatives which generate value for all stakeholders.

Following the BOP Protocol, SC Johnson and other multinational corporations identify and develop sustainable new products and businesses in partnership with BOP suppliers and consumers, resulting in lasting value that stems from a deep understanding of their needs, perspectives and capabilities.

Adapted from:

www.scjohnson.com/PR05/cnv_4_npn.asp#

What you can do:

- ◆ Rethink your organisation's stakeholder engagement strategy. View the stakeholder interests as inputs into a process of change for sustainability rather than a risk reduction strategy or information gathering. Ask, 'what can we all do together to drive change for sustainability across all our organisations?' and 'Is there a goal for sustainability we can work collectively on to achieve?'
- ◆ Explore opportunities for partnering with other organisations, especially outside your own industry sector using a mix of corporate, government and non-for-profit partners. Define a common goal or vision you can all work towards. Be prepared to share information and knowledge about sustainability. Put aside your preconceptions and listen to and learn from others
- ◆ Support staff in networking outside your organisation to share change experiences and better understand levers for change because we're all trying to do the same thing!
- ◆ Read more about partnering and networking:
 - www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/about/keycomps_partnership.htm
 - www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/links/partnership.htm
- ◆ Read 'Partnering for Success'. Partnering for Success is the fourth annual report of the World Economic Forum's Global Corporate Citizenship Initiative (GCCCI). The report focuses on some of the successful approaches that GCCCI companies are taking to build partnerships with other private enterprises, government bodies and civil society organisations to address key international development challenges. Available at:
 - www.iblf.org/docs/PartneringforSuccess.pdf



5 Adopt a systemic approach

Do you find it's hard to know where sustainability begins and ends?

It often seems easier these days to separate a large issue or problem into smaller parts and focus on 'solving' each part individually. But, sustainability isn't like this. You can't simply take it apart because sustainability is all pervasive, a ball of wool that can't and shouldn't be unravelled.

However, don't be alarmed! Systems thinking is the answer to this interconnectedness and seeming complexity. By developing your systems thinking skills you can better understand and manage complex situations within and external to your organisation and make long term, successful change for sustainability.



So how is systems thinking different from traditional problem solving?

Traditional problem solving techniques analyse and 'deconstruct' situations to make them appear simpler than they really are. This means that the 'solution' is also too simple and when implemented, falls apart. Systems thinking:

- ◆ Looks at the whole, larger context, resisting our tendency to simplify problems and solutions. It sees the larger properties of whole systems that emerge from the interaction of individual parts;

"I have been challenged about my previous values, behaviour, ways of thinking and my view of change. I'm more aware of the interconnectedness of work projects, people and the natural environment and... I realise that there are varying points of view on sustainability and ways to solve the issues and that the only way to ensure the best outcome is to engage with others".

Project participant in Journal Summary

- ◆ Helps us to look at multiple influences and relationships when we explore and participate in resolving issues and accept uncertainty and ambiguity as a natural part of change;
- ◆ Expands our worldview so we become more aware of the boundaries and assumptions used to define issues. It recognises the influences of our worldviews and self perception and helps us appreciate other viewpoints;
- ◆ Recognises there are many ways of learning and knowing and restores a sense of connection to place, to others and the wider world; and
- ◆ Integrates decision making and encourages more participatory and holistic approaches to identify better sustainability strategies.

How did the participants use systems thinking?

Participants became more aware that sustainability has to not only have a ‘whole of institution’ approach but also an ‘outside institution’ approach too. Building this approach required a big change in thinking to create cultural change rather than a merely technical change. Some participants did not realise just how important or challenging this could be.

The in-depth discussions during the workshop sessions helped the participants to understand and accept the complexities of sustainability and the many influences and levers for change. They began to adopt a more systemic thinking approach in their projects by becoming more aware of their own biases, through critical thinking and reflection as a group, which led them to drive more informed change for sustainability.



“...sustainability is everywhere and it shouldn't sit within a particular group or person”.

Project participant in Mentoring Session

“I have a growing appreciation that it is the process of discussion and challenging ideas that is critical in any sustainability program rather than getting fixated on agreement or adhering to a single dogma”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

Case study 9: BHP Billiton

BHP Billiton aimed to implement a measurement method for non-traditional value in supplier agreements, such as risk mitigation strategies and avoidance activities. Traditional financial value was already incorporated into these agreements.

Firstly, a cross functional team was formed which used a systemic thinking approach to identify existing value measurement systems within and external to the organisation. They evaluated the levers for change, especially the link between the introduction of non-traditional value measurement on the supply chain and the impact on BHP Billiton's sustainability performance. The team also identified internal and external stakeholder issues to better understand how to implement any measurement systems.

The team worked with existing systems and processes to pilot a measurement method to build acceptance of the change in an inclusive way. They also became aware that a change in one department or system would impact on other stakeholders.

After the pilot, the resulting feedback led to a clearer identification of the most suitable indicators and these were then rolled out across the organisation.

BHP Billiton used: Systemic thinking, critical thinking and reflection, visioning and participation

“Had I applied systemic thinking to these responses from staff and management, I may have made the needed leap in thinking earlier than I did”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

How other organisations use systems thinking

Hewlett Packard

Hewlett Package (HP) is a leading global supplier of technology solutions to consumers, businesses and institutions and has a very strong commitment to global corporate citizenship.

One of the key initiatives which HP is known for is its product stewardship program based on a life cycle analysis of its products. Lifecycle analysis incorporates; design for environment; energy efficiency; materials innovation; design for recyclability; packaging; and product reuse and recycling.

HP involves stakeholders in the life cycle analysis and works collaboratively with them to minimise environmental impacts. This is an example of systemic thinking at work.

Source:

www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/gcreport/pdf/dfe_life_cycle.pdf

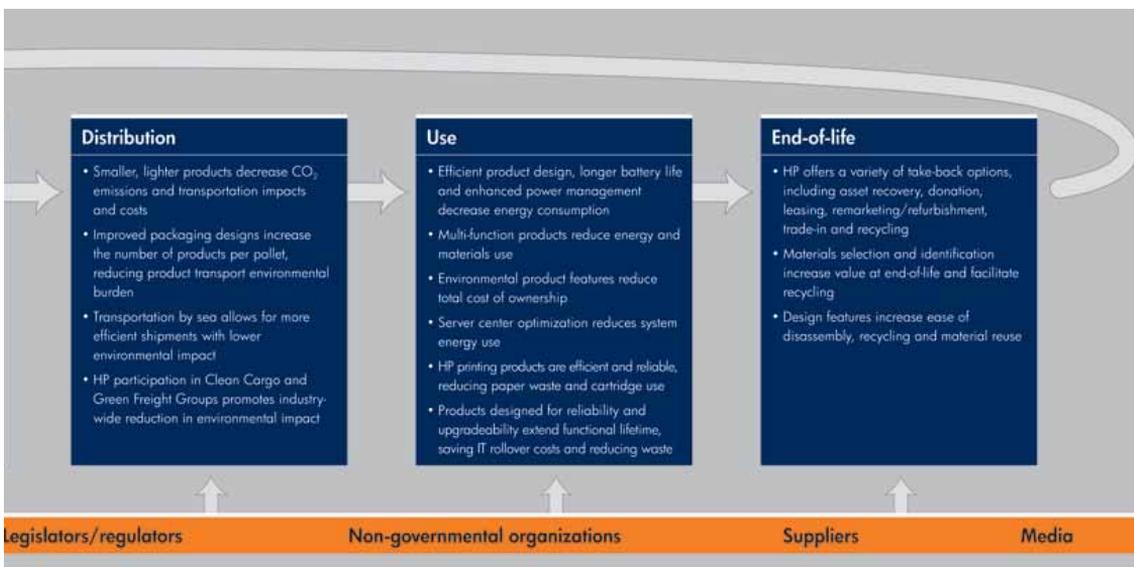


What you can do:

- ◆ Start to embrace complexity and uncertainty rather than trying to simplify and control change. Do this by searching for multiple influences in situations and exploring how things link together. Take a ‘helicopter view’ rather than focusing on just one cause
- ◆ Run systemic thinking exercises in teams. Take a complex situation in your organisation or an issue such as global warming, waste or congestion in cities. Get people to role play different stakeholder perspectives and create a discussion forum to hear (but not necessarily ‘solve’ or reach consensus on) all the perspectives. This helps people realise that there are many views of the world and better understand the diversity of thoughts, actions and ideas
- ◆ Get others to help you address complexity and provide input into the formulation of change actions and the task won’t seem so daunting. Allow others to test your assumptions and the boundaries you are putting around the issues
- ◆ Read more about systemic thinking:

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/about/keycomps_systemic.htm

www.aries.mq.edu.au/portal/links/envision.htm#systemic





6

Move beyond expecting a linear path to change

Does your organisation still use Gantt charts for projects?

Many organisations continue to use a Gantt chart approach to change; a linear process, common in most project management systems and planning methodologies, which focuses on regular deliverables and a deadline for implementation. This process is driven by results and accountability (all good things to aspire to) but this process of change is not appropriate for change for sustainability. Sustainability is more complex and requires a different way of thinking (as we've seen in the previous five Insights).

The process of change for sustainability needs to be more iterative and reflective, addressing issues as they occur and often taking a branch path for a while. The change process needs to be more flexible, and potentially more opportunistic too, and this may lead to more innovative, productive and unexpected outcomes.

How can the change process differ?

The change process used in Action Research (see Glossary in the *Additional information* section) steers organisations away from the traditional approach to a more critically reflective one. That is not to say that change doesn't occur. It does. But it is the process by which change occurs that is different in Action Research, not necessarily the outcomes. It is this process which improves the outcomes. Once mastered, this powerful process can be reused over and over again.

"It is OK to change from the original path and whilst surprises can be challenging, at the same time they may end a better result. Don't be too programmatic and be open to adjustments to plan".

Project participant in Workshop



What was the experience of the organisations?

Without exception, all of the organisations involved in the project used Action Research. They focused on trialling this new way of thinking and a new process of change, rather than just focusing on the goal.

In addition, many participants have subsequently reused aspects of the change process, especially building on staff engagement and participation levels from their change project.

Case study 10: Visy Industries

Visy Industries undertook a project to develop a training package to address a perceived gap in sustainability knowledge which could be used at each site within Australia.

From the outset, the project took a much more iterative approach. A training package was initially developed, using existing company processes. Following this the Corporate Environment Department used critical thinking and reflection and concluded that the training package was not targeted and would not actually achieve its aim.

Subsequently, the package was revised and key internal stakeholders were engaged. This engagement process opened up lines of communication and led to a deeper understanding of site needs and identification of levers for change. It also highlighted that the revised package would still not lead to change for sustainability.

Finally, this feedback, together with external assistance, led to the development of a 12 month training program, much more tailored to staff needs. The program takes a consistent approach across the organisation and is based on key messages which are building internal capacity and action for sustainability.

“... I am no longer fixed in my view there is only one way to drive change. I am now more flexible and open minded and more knowledgeable on alternative methods such as the Education for Sustainability approach and the value of Action Research”.

Project participant in Journal Summary



The participant... “usually moves from problem straight to solution. Now sees it is important to move from issue to process to solution”.

ARIES reflections from Mentoring Session with project participant

The program is now being run and is still being amended, in response to feedback during the year, and this further highlights the iterative, cyclical process of Action Research adopted by Visy Industries.

Visy Industries used: Critical thinking and reflection, participation and systemic thinking

Case study 11: Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH)

The DEH planned to use the 2004/05 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) report as a starting point to form links between measurement, planning and performance improvement. However, the reporting process was significantly delayed by a rethink in the type and focus of deliverables.

Systemic thinking about the reasons for the delay resulted in a greater appreciation of the multiple influences and relationships in government. This thinking helped place the reporting process within the broader context of whole of government and allowed the project to change focus and direction. Action Research also gave the DEH an opportunity to better evaluate the process of change in government and the various levers affecting change.

The focus changed to the formation of key relationships with both senior managers and bottom up stakeholders which created better engagement and participation in the reporting process. This engagement is key for making a clear link between the TBL reporting process and decision making and planning which will lead to greater change towards sustainability.

DEH used: Critical thinking and reflection, participation, systemic thinking and partnering

How other organisations use Action Research

Sydney Water Corporation

Sydney Water provides drinking water, recycled water, wastewater services and some stormwater services to more than four million people in Sydney and regional New South Wales.

In 2002, the Environment and Sustainability Group at Sydney Water implemented an interactive on-line training package to provide professional development in sustainability for all staff. By June 2003 about 2,000 employees had completed the training and Sydney Water wanted to evaluate whether the training was raising awareness and resulting in changes towards sustainability in the workplace.

Rather than using external evaluators, a cross divisional group of staff were engaged to perform the evaluation. This group used an Action Research approach to assess the impact of the training package whilst they undertook the training. Action Research experts assisted staff in planning and conducting their Action Research activities.

Action Research helped the group to better understand what they did and did not learn and why. This led to the training package being iteratively adapted. The process also encouraged participation in the further development of the training package and dialogue across the organisation as to how to better achieve change for sustainability.

Source:

Tilbury, D. and Podger, D. (2004) Sydney Water Participatory Action Research Evaluation: ESD Awareness Package. Sydney: Graduate School of the Environment, Macquarie University



What you can do

- ◆ Think about how you usually project plan. Is it a linear plan or do you adjust it as you go? If it is linear, why is this so? Reflect on whether you are able to challenge this linear path to change and if not, why not
- ◆ Even if you need to follow a prescribed change procedure at work, ensure you build in time for critical thinking and reflection into project planning along with key milestones. This will give you 'permission' and time to stop and think about how the project is going, reflect and then adjust your plans if necessary
- ◆ Trial this new way in small project first, even with something you do at home eg. planning a holiday or moving house, to make you see how it is different. Focus on the outcome you're trying to achieve and document how you got there
- ◆ Read more about Action Research:

www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html

A range of background and more specific information on Action Research and the journal 'Action Research International' from Southern Cross University in northern New South Wales.

www.alarpm.org.au

Various resources and the journal 'Action Learning and Action Research' from The Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association.

“Finally, the project emphasised the need to be resilient. Being involved in change processes requires a specific set of personal characteristics. All change takes time, change for sustainability can be drawn out and complex. Therefore, there is a need for perseverance. This also emphasises the importance of mentors and networks and partnerships. Change processes also require the need to be flexible. There is more than one way to get to the end goal. The skills of facilitation, collaboration and negotiation are critical to achieving change for sustainability as an end goal”.

Project participant in Journal Summary



In summary

Rethinking change for sustainability using an Action Research approach supported by an Education for Sustainability framework provides new ways of engaging with change in an organisation. To be most effective, it needs support from senior staff and organisational culture as well as learning and development resources.

The results speak for themselves:

- ◆ Organisational response to sustainability is improved by people understanding the vision for sustainability, having access to learning resources and taking ownership for change. In addition, there is more empowerment and people feel they have permission to participate;
- ◆ The Education for Sustainability framework develops a more holistic approach to change, recognised as providing more enduring and widespread benefits. The framework also promotes the establishment of networks and more lasting partnerships which drive broader societal based change;
- ◆ The Action Research approach involves participants as researchers of their own practice and can result in catalytic change for sustainability. It enables change agents to identify and use levers for change to embed sustainability practices and processes within an organisation; and
- ◆ By sharing experiences and reflections between organisations, either informally or via a published resource, practical guidance can be provided to others to make change.

If this approach can be used frequently and is reinforced by a positive culture, it has the potential to build both organisational and societal capacity which drives successful, significant change for sustainability.

“Education for Sustainability and Action Research are effective in making change towards sustainability because they recognise that incremental steps, review and adaptation are the key to moving, and generally moving forward. The concepts recognise that taking the time to share, engage, learn from others and understand others is the key to moving in the right direction and does not ultimately slow the process down”.

Project participant in Journal Summary

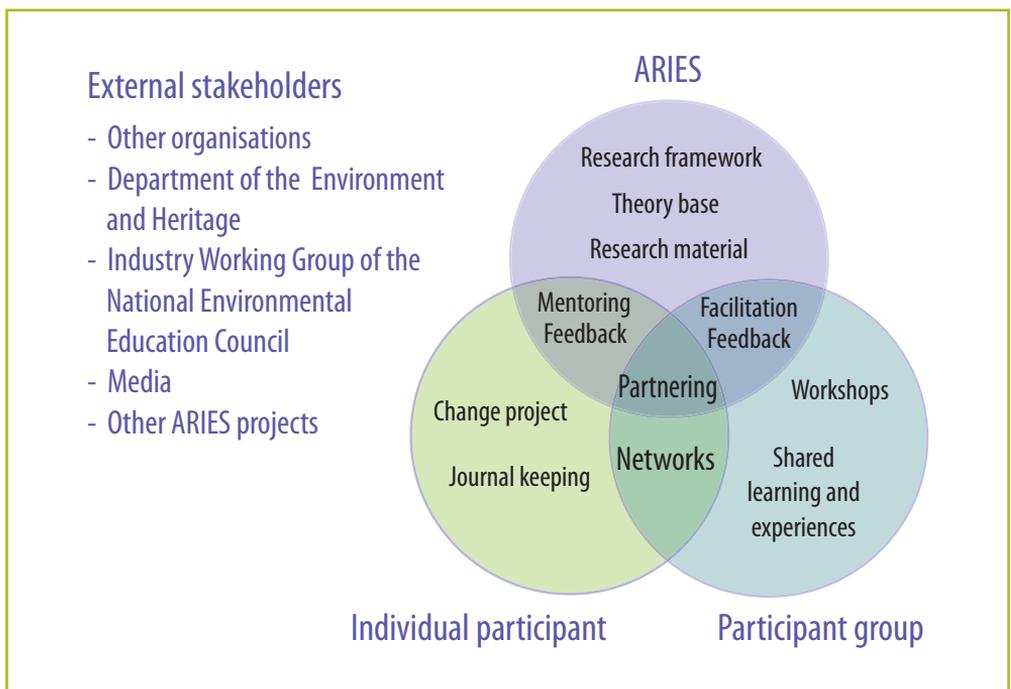


Additional information

1: Key elements of the project process

The key elements of the 12 month project shown below were:

- ◆ Development of initial and ongoing research material;
- ◆ Seven bi-monthly workshops facilitated by ARIES;
- ◆ Development of specific participant actions for sustainability;
- ◆ Monthly mentoring facilitated by ARIES;
- ◆ A reflective journal kept by project participants; and
- ◆ Feedback from participants.





Additional information

2: Who was involved and what did they do?

1. Research partners

Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability

ARIES is the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability based at Macquarie University, Sydney. ARIES is primarily funded by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage. Its core business is to undertake research that informs policy and practice in Education for Sustainability across a range of sectors including: business and industry, school education, community education, further and higher education.

ARIES adopts an innovative approach to research with a view to translating awareness of sustainability issues into action and change. ARIES is concerned with how we inform, motivate and manage structural change towards sustainability.

In this project ARIES framed the research, planned and facilitated the project stages which involved workshops, sourcing research material and provided monthly mentoring to participants.

For more information see: www.aries.mq.edu.au

Department of the Environment and Heritage

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) is the Australian Government's lead agency for environmental and heritage policies and programs. The research project and this booklet were funded by the DEH through the Natural Heritage Trust.

The Sustainability Education Section of the DEH promotes education that develops skills, knowledge and values to promote behaviour in support of a sustainable environment. It is responsible for developing a new National Action Plan for Education for Sustainable Development, implementing an appropriate Government response to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, consolidating and expanding the Government's Australian Sustainable Schools initiative in all States and Territories, promoting the use of the National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools and improving our knowledge base in Sustainability Education through the partnership with ARIES at Macquarie University.

For more information see: www.deh.gov.au

2. Project participants

Amcor Australasia

Amcor Australasia is a major manufacturer of plastic, fibre and metal packaging in Australia and New Zealand. Amcor is committed to managing its businesses around the world in an environmentally responsible manner at all times. This extends beyond its manufacturing facilities to also include its products and services. Through continuous research into Amcor products and production systems, the company aims to achieve best practice environmental management across all its operations around the world.

Project outcomes: Implemented Positive Performance Indicators for health, safety and environment.

For more information see: www.amcor.com

BHP Billiton

BHP Billiton is the world's largest diversified resources company. BHP Billiton's vision for sustainable development is to be the company of choice and creating sustainable value for a wide range of stakeholders. Central to this vision is the goal of 'Zero Harm' to people and the environment. This means BHP Billiton aspires to create a workplace that is injury, illness and incident free and seeks to minimise and, where possible, eliminate any environmental impacts over time.

Project outcomes: Implemented measurement method for non-traditional value in supplier agreements.

For more information see: www.bhpbilliton.com

Department of the Environment and Heritage

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) is the Australian Government's lead agency for environmental and heritage policies and programs.

Its 'Sustainability in Government Program' aims to improve the environmental performance of Australian Government departments and agencies. The DEH recognises the value of leading by example and so works on encouraging its own staff to achieve better practice, including through the coordination of DEH sustainability reporting.

Project outcomes: Finalised 2004/05 TBL report and started to form links between measurement and planning and performance improvement.

For more information see: www.deh.gov.au

National Australia Bank (NAB)

NAB is an international financial services organisation that provides a comprehensive range of financial products and services through its group of companies. NAB published its second CSR Report in December 2005. This report highlights how NAB is applying its corporate principles practically via a wide range of CSR initiatives to support building a sustainable business for the long term.

Project outcomes: Developed a draft CSR Procurement Policy and an initial supporting procedure to assist with the supplier selection process.

For more information see: www.nabgroup.com

Parramatta City Council

Parramatta is situated 24 km from the Sydney CBD, is the 6th largest CBD in Australia and the economic capital of Western Sydney. Parramatta City Council delivers a huge variety of services to the area and plays a strong leadership role in stimulating business and investment, improvements to the public domain and enhancement of the environmental and social fabric of the city.

Project outcomes: Engaged staff to develop a vision for sustainability and developed strategies to achieve this vision.

For more information see: www.parracity.nsw.gov.au

Toyota Australia

Toyota Australia one of Toyota Japan's global manufacturing centres with a long term commitment to the domestic and export markets. Toyota Australia's head office and manufacturing/engineering activities in Melbourne are complemented by a sales and marketing function in Sydney. Toyota Australia is striving to develop a culture that recognises the importance of environmentally responsible behaviour and the need to continuously improve business operations, always driving innovation and evolution.

Project outcomes: Analysed employee awareness levels and engaged staff in change for sustainability.

For more information see: www.toyota.com.au

Visy Industries

Visy Industries is a packaging company which manufactures and recycles a wide range of primary and secondary packaging. It has recovery and recycling programs for the full range of packaging it produces and is committed to recycling and the environment.

Project outcomes: Formulated a 12 month training program to build capacity and create action for sustainability.

For more information see: www.visy.com.au

Wesley Mission Sydney

Wesley Mission Sydney is part of the Uniting Group of churches and its commitment to sustainability stems from the sense of Christian stewardship, which supports inter-generational equity, in which humans are to care for people and the planet. Wesley Mission Sydney provides a diverse range of services to support people in need and is committed to a balanced ministry of the Word, action and Spirit.

Project outcomes: Engaged key staff for sustainability and achieved commitment to resources, planning and performance improvement.

For more information see: www.wesleymission.org.au

Westpac Banking Corporation (Westpac)

Westpac provides a broad range of banking and financial services for personal, business and institutional customers in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. Westpac has a strong commitment to sustainability and been assessed as the global sustainability leader for the banking sector in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index for the past four years in a row.

Project outcomes: Identified internal and external drivers for sustainable supply chain management.

For more information see: www.westpac.com.au

Yarra Valley Water

Yarra Valley Water is the largest of Melbourne's three retail water companies and provides water and sewerage services across Melbourne's northern and eastern suburbs. It is owned by the Victorian Government. Yarra Valley Water recognises that the well being of our community and the strength of our economy are dependent on the health of our environment. To that end Yarra Valley Water strives to provide water and sewerage services within the carrying capacity of nature.

Project outcomes: Developed an understanding of the link between information and values which led to the creation of more robust sustainability strategies.

For more information see: www.yarravalleywater.com.au



Additional information

3: Glossary

Action Research

Action Research can be used as a collaborative research tool and is often represented as a four-phase cyclical process of critical enquiry – plan formation, action, outcome observation and reflection. It aims not just to improve, but to innovate practice.

Action Research provides a valuable process for exploring ways in which sustainability is relevant to the researchers' workplaces and/or lifestyles. It views change as the desired outcome and involves participants as researchers of their own practice. In this way Action Research produces more than just a research document. It results in catalytic change for sustainability. Its focus on critical enquiry and continuous self-evaluation makes it a useful tool for professional development in Education for Sustainability. Critical Action Research aims to change systems and to embed change in practice.

Capacity Building

Capacity Building consists of participative training which takes place either through a formal course, workshop or in-situ mentoring support. The focus is the development of the individual and/or the organisation.

Corporate Citizenship

Corporate Citizenship refers to the way a company leverages their social, economic and human assets. When a company uses its assets to bring about measurable gains not only for itself, but for society as well, that company is acting as a good Corporate Citizen. A good Corporate Citizen integrates basic social values with everyday business practices, operations and policies, so that these values influence daily decision-making across all aspects of the business. It takes into account its impact on all stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, suppliers and the natural environment. For further information refer to 'Corporate Social Responsibility'.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility is the decision-making and implementation process that guides all company activities in the protection and promotion of international human rights, labour and environmental standards and compliance with legal requirements. CSR involves a commitment to contribute to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of communities through the on-going engagement of stakeholders, the active participation of communities impacted by company activities and the public reporting of company policies and performance in the economic, environmental and social arenas. For further information refer to 'Corporate Citizenship'.

Critical Theory

Critical Theory is a philosophical framework that seeks to radically critique systems of knowledge and power. It seeks to develop systemic changes as opposed to individual behaviour changes. It emphasises the importance of engaging people in thinking critically and developing their own responses and actions to issues rather than imposing on them previously constructed actions. Critical Theory attacks social practices, which obstruct social justice, human emancipation and ecological sustainability. It is not only 'critical' in the sense of being 'deconstructive' in relation to dominant thinking, but also 'constructive' in the sense of exploring alternatives to it. Critical Theory underpins an Education for Sustainability approach. For further information refer to 'Critical Thinking'.

Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is an essential part of Education for Sustainability. It challenges us to examine the way we interpret the world and how our knowledge and opinions are shaped by those around us. Critical Thinking leads us to a deeper understanding of interests behind our communities and the influences of media and advertising in our lives.

Education for Sustainability (EfS)

Education for Sustainability has formalised as a concept as a result of international agreements and the global call to actively pursue sustainable development. EfS is also referred to as 'learning for sustainability' or 'education for sustainable development' and provides a new orientation for current practice in Environmental Education.

This new orientation attempts to move beyond education in and about the environment approaches (ie. developing understanding and awareness) to focus on equipping learners with the necessary skills to be able to take positive action to address a range of sustainability issues. EfS motivates, equips and involves individuals and social groups in reflecting on how we currently live and work, in making informed decisions and creating ways to work towards a more sustainable world. Underpinned by the principles of Critical Theory, EfS aims to go beyond individual behaviour change and seeks to engage and empower people to implement systemic changes. For further information refer to ‘Critical Theory’.

Envisioning and Futures Thinking

Envisioning a better future is a process that engages people in conceiving and capturing a vision of their ideal future. Envisioning, also known as ‘futures thinking’, helps people to discover their possible and preferred futures and to uncover the beliefs and assumptions that underlie these visions and choices. It helps learners establish a link between their long term goals and their immediate actions. Envisioning offers direction and energy and provides impetus for action by harnessing the deep aspirations which motivate what people do in the present.

Facilitation

Facilitation encourages learning to be driven by the learner. The facilitation process aligns well with the principles of sustainability as it has the following characteristics:

- ◆ Enables a learner centred approach;
- ◆ Equips the learner with the necessary skills and knowledge to take action and actively participate in change and decision-making;
- ◆ Develops the capacity of individuals and groups to ‘critically’ reflect upon the social and cultural context underpinning the change they seek; and
- ◆ Offers a more democratic approach to sustainability. The process encourages all citizens to engage in open dialogue and eliminates inequitable power hierarchies as the facilitators do not have a stake in the change for sustainability and the process does not rely on the expert knowledge.

Mentoring

Mentoring, in this context, provides individuals and groups, who are grappling with sustainability, with the support and understanding that they need to engage with this concept. The process offers mentoree centred, collaborative support and space to engage people in critically examining opportunities for change within their home, community or workplace. Valuable and important components of the mentoring process are dialogue and sharing of information amongst colleague networks and the creation of opportunities for relevant change to the mentoree.

National Environmental Education Council

A key element of the Australian Government's National Action Plan for Environmental Education is the establishment of the National Environmental Education Council. The Council is a non-statutory body comprised of people from a variety of sectors who provide expert advice to the Government on Environmental Education issues. A key goal of the Council is to raise the profile of Environmental Education and, in particular, how Australians can move beyond environmental awareness to informed action.

Stakeholders

A Stakeholder is a person or group with an interest in an activity and or outcome. It is a term frequently associated with sustainable development. Stakeholders may be internal or external to a group or organisation and may be direct or indirect beneficiaries of an activity or outcome. Sustainable Development promotes cross-sectoral stakeholder engagement in the planning and implementation of actions. For further information refer to 'Sustainable Development and Sustainability'.

Sustainable Development and Sustainability

The idea of Sustainability owes a great deal to the United Nations which in 1983 set up the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) and promoted quality of life for present as well as future generations. The key goals of Sustainability are to live within our environmental limits, to achieve social justice and to foster economic and social progress.

Issues such as food security, poverty, sustainable tourism, urban quality, women, fair trade, green consumerism, ecological public health and waste management as well as those of climatic change, deforestation, land degradation, desertification, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity and terrorism are of primary concern to Sustainable Development.

The issues underlying ‘Sustainable Development’ or ‘Sustainability’ are complex and cannot be encapsulated within the diplomatic language and compromises. Sustainability is open to different interpretations and takes on different meanings not only between cultures but also between different interest groups within societies. Sustainability embraces equality for all and for this reason, a key aim of Sustainability is to enable multi-stakeholder groups to define their vision of Sustainability and to work towards it.

Systems Thinking

Systems Thinking is a thinking methodology based upon a critical understanding of how complex systems (such as environments, ecosystems and organisations) function - considering the whole rather than the sum of the parts. Systems Thinking provides an alternative to the dominant way of thinking, which emphasises analysis and understanding through deconstruction.

In comparison, Systems Thinking offers a better way to understand and manage complex situations because it emphasises holistic, integrative approaches, which take into account the relationships between system components and works toward long term solutions critical to addressing issues of sustainability. Systems Thinking offers an innovative approach to looking at the world and the issues of sustainability in a broader, interdisciplinary and more relational way. Closely related to holistic and ecological thinking, systemic approaches help us shift our focus and attention from ‘things’ to processes, from static states to dynamics and from ‘parts’ to ‘wholes’.

“...critical thinking and relationships are key to any change for sustainability. I also learnt that sometimes slow is good, non linear is best, as they allow quiet reflection along the way and absorption of implications of the change by many people”.

Project participant in Feedback Form from Workshop

