



# **SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION LEARNING TO CHANGE**

**REPORT ON  
SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION  
ROUNDTABLE PROJECT  
2004 - 2005**

**APRIL 2005  
PREPARED BY THE SUSTAINABILITY  
EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE  
WORKING GROUP**

*'As the economy grows, pressures on the Earth's natural systems and resources intensify. From 1950 to 1997, the use of lumber tripled, that of paper increased six fold, the fish catch increased nearly fivefold, grain consumption nearly tripled, fossil fuel burning nearly quadrupled, and air and water pollutants multiplied several fold. The unfortunate reality is that the economy continues to expand, but the ecosystem on which it depends does not, creating an increasingly stressed relationship.'* (Brown 1998: 91 in UNESCO report: UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2000-2014)

The pressures on the natural world intensify year by year. Victoria is not exempt with the average person requiring an Ecological Footprint of 8-9 hectares. Three Earths would be needed to supply the resource flows and waste sinks if everyone on Earth lived like Victorians.

In Victoria the State Government is about to launch a Sustainability Strategy. To be effective, this strategy must give high priority to the critical need for a wide-reaching program of Education for Sustainability (ESD)

*'It is true to say that everyone is a stakeholder in education for sustainable development. All of us will feel the impact of its relative success or failure, and all of us affect the impact of ESD by our behaviour, which may be supportive or undermining'* ( UNESCO)

## **SUMMARY**

### **The Sustainability Education (SE) Roundtable**

The Sustainability Education Roundtable is an informal, broadly-based forum open to all who share a commitment to a comprehensive, integrated approach to education for sustainability

In the series of four Roundtables held at CERES during 2004, an enormous number of specific opportunities, needs, issues and actions were considered by 145 people from 47 organisations. Six workshop focus themes were established: Lighthouse Education Programs; Government Policies & Leadership; Involving Everyone as Stakeholders; Engaging Communities; Networking-Providers and Partnerships; Funding and Resourcing Sustainability Education.

These gave rise to the eleven key processes or “drivers” for Sustainability Education. The Government is asked to consider these during the development of Victoria’s “Learning to Live Sustainably” Strategy and overall Environmental Sustainability Framework. Victoria needs to provide greater recognition for and higher support to Sustainability Education and the Roundtable highlights the form this support can take.

A full 50-page report has been lodged with the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

### **Key drivers**

The key drivers identified as critical for successful statewide education and behaviour change for sustainability can be summarised as follows:

#### **1. RECOGNISE, ACKNOWLEDGE AND WORK WITH THE PARADOX BETWEEN SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSUMERISM.**

Environmental and ethically sensitive products are becoming a popular alternative to mass-market products. Even mass-market products in some cases reflect sustainable production and consumption principles. We need to work together with business to enhance knowledge and create the right economic forces to build on this movement so that we educate for avoidance, reduction, reuse and recycling. See page 14

#### **2. CREATE IMMEDIATE, PERVASIVE AND LASTING CULTURAL CHANGE AS A PRE-REQUISITE FOR A MOVE TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING**

People are constantly evolving in behaviour so we know we have the ability to change. People are ingenious, innovative and creative in the face of challenges. All sectors of society should have the opportunity to apply themselves to the challenges of sustainability and create an advanced problem-solving culture. We just need to catalyse this change. See page 16

#### **3. ESTABLISH TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION/LEARNING AS A VITAL PROCESS IN CHANGING SOCIETY TOWARDS LIVING MORE SUSTAINABLY**

Education not only about and for sustainability but AS sustainability. The shift is towards learning as change, a continual exploration through practice. Transformative. That's new. That sounds exciting. It IS exciting. We need to identify and promote education models that foster genuine and lasting societal change. See page 18

#### 4. DEVELOP METHODS AND RESOURCES TO MOVE FROM TRANSMISSIVE TO TRANSFORMATIVE MODELS OF EDUCATION

The sustainability education sector is enthused and ready for the move. Lighthouse programs already exist and show the way but need promotion. We can identify the reasonably modest resources that will help us make the move. See page 19

#### 5. LEGITIMISE A 'BOTTOM-UP' APPROACH TO SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION: SUPPORT AND ENHANCE GRASS ROOTS INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE AND ADVANCE 'OWNERSHIP'

Networks and participation are so powerful at a local level and they can have a global impact when supported and liberated; a combination that fosters robust communities interested in the local economy and environment. See page 22

#### 6. DEVELOP A 'WHOLE OF SOCIETY' FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION INCLUDING HOUSEHOLD, WORKPLACE, GOVERNMENT, RECREATION, COMMUNITY, BUSINESS, FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

We know that our 'reach' must be extensive and needs to carry into our homes, our workplaces, our places of learning, where we do business and our places of politics. We need to build on the genuine home-based interest people have in gardens, water and energy use. See page 24

#### 7. RECOGNISE THAT SOUND RESEARCH FROM A VARIETY OF SECTORS UNDERPINS KNOWLEDGE AND LEADS TO BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

Some of the world leaders in environmental education research live in Australia. Let's work with them to develop effective research at academic and community levels so that careful evaluation and research can create a stream of new ideas for sustainable outcomes. See page 26

#### 8. FACILITATE COLLEGIALLY, NETWORKING AND SHARED VISION OF ALL PRACTITIONERS OF SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION.

Let's share our experiences. Let's develop more networking opportunities. Let's make room for visionaries in all their diversity. We need trans-disciplinary thinking to translate problems into opportunities. See page 28

## 9. PUBLICISE AND HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSES: DISPLAY AND PROMOTE FLAGSHIP, 'LIGHTHOUSE' SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION FOR CHANGE PROGRAMS, HUBS AND PARTNERSHIPS.

We have great sustainability education programs in Victoria. Everyone needs to be not only hearing about SE but engaged in learning to live sustainably. We all need to hear about the existing achievements. We need showcasing opportunities and resources to allow the enthusiasm and good ideas to snowball. See page 30

## 10. CONSOLIDATE THE STATE GOVERNMENT ROLE OF DETERMINED LEADERSHIP, LEADING BY EXAMPLE AND DEVELOPING A WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The State Government needs to know where it is going with sustainable development and provide some firm leadership to the community. Government departments need to sing with more gusto from the same hymn book. See page 32

## 11. CREATE TRANSPARENT, PREDICTABLE RESOURCING SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION.

The Roundtables are a giant step forward but we need to continue to work collaboratively to maximise their impact. Funding opportunities need to be more systemic and targeted towards achieving maximum lasting change and comprehensive involvement of all stakeholders. See page 35

### **Background to the Round Table**

. So far as possible within the limitations of funding and human resources available, efforts were made to foster wide representation from across the different sectors of society and the peak bodies in Sustainability Education. The Roundtables focused on collaborative solutions and generating practical and viable recommendations for action.

Key functions of the Roundtable process in 2004 were:

- to contribute to and help sustain the present dialogue aimed at strengthening Environmental Education and Sustainability Education in Victoria
- to prepare advice to assist the Victorian Government in its role in Sustainability Education

CERES received funding from the Dept of Sustainability and Environment to administer the Roundtable process through the work of Eric Bottomley, CERES. Mike Hill chaired and advised the 4 Round Tables and 15 working group meetings. Teresa Day of the Victorian Association for Environmental Education (VAEE) helped write the report. The DSE provided valuable ongoing advice through the role of Steve Malcolm.

It became clear in the process that a significant organising group was needed to manage the detailed work that underpinned the Roundtable process. This group was established with representation from DSE, CERES, Gould League, EPA, VAAE, Maunsell, Environment Victoria, Leastwaste and Victoria University. It met between Roundtable Forums to collate material from the forums, plan each Forum, oversee the processes, develop the participant database and operate a communications system. The individuals who gave so generously of their time and experience in this were:- Colin Hocking (Victoria University), Frank Mitchell (EPA), Di Marshall (DSE), Pat Armstrong (Gould League), Michael Nolan (Maunsell), Judith Alcorn (Leastwaste), Daniel Voronoff (Environment Victoria) plus the persons listed above..

### **Use of the term ‘Sustainability Education’**

Throughout the report we refer to Sustainability Education (SE).

Different expressions are used for these new approaches such as ‘Education for Sustainability’ as described in the report *Whole School Approaches to Sustainability: an International Review of whole school sustainability programs* by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability.(ARIES): *Education For Sustainability differs from traditional approaches to Environmental Education in that it focuses sharply on more complex social issues, such as the links between environmental quality, human equality, human rights and peace and their underpinning politics. This requires citizens to have skills in critical enquiry and systemic thinking to explore the complexity and implications of sustainability.*

Other bodies such as UNESCO (*UN Decade for Sustainable Development 2005-14, Draft International Implementation Scheme, October 2004*) emphasise the full scope of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

*ESD is for everyone, at whatever stage of life they find themselves. It takes place therefore within a perspective of lifelong learning, engaging all possible spaces of learning, formal, non-formal and informal, from early childhood to adult life.*

*It is true to say that everyone is a stakeholder in education for sustainable development. All of us will feel the impact of its relative success or failure, and all of us affect the impact of ESD by our behaviour, which may be supportive or undermining.*

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