

Port Stephens Council has set a standard in its five Directional Statements representing five pillars of sustainability, as in:

1. Social Sustainability
2. Cultural Sustainability
3. Economic Sustainability
4. Environmental Sustainability
5. Business Excellence – now expressed also, and more appropriately, as 'Governance'.

Society in general however, is still attuned to the erroneous belief that our environment, the natural world, is a subset of the economy, thus emphasising a primacy and a priority for economic outcomes and too often to the detriment of the natural assets we really are so dependent upon.

Sustainability, obviously enough is a long-term, life-long journey to be achieved in a multitude of minor to major objectives over time. Of course it is complex but this must not deter us from:

Firstly, acknowledging that the conventional approach of 'business as usual' will not deliver our needs for the future.

Secondly, this requires a new outlook, a new way of thinking, and new standards in planning.

Thirdly, global warming and climate issues are gathering momentum. We must act with resolve and the determination to seek sustainable objectives now. Later could be too late and not in the interests of our common futures.

Prof. Herman Daly –Ecological Economist, University of Maryland-  
former Senior Economist, Environmental Department, World Bank  
*"The longer we pursue affluence, and the longer the population grows, the more we will deplete resources and overload the environment with wastes. The longer we keep over-shooting carrying capacity, the more we lower it, the more we mortgage the future ... the belief that economic growth can long continue flies in the face of logic, reason and common sense."*

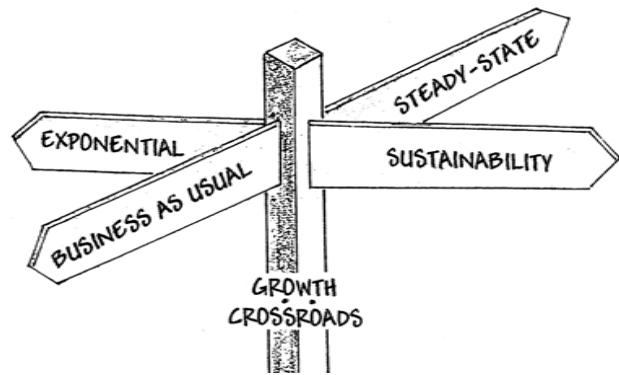
# A SIGNPOST AND A JOURNEY TO THE FUTURE

# SUSTAINABILITY

\_\_\_\_\_A BRIEF INTERPRETATION\_\_\_\_\_

MARCH 2010

Issued by:  
EcoNetwork – Port Stephens Inc.  
PO Box 97 Nelson Bay 2315  
Email- econet@nelsonbay.com



## A SIGNPOST AND A JOURNEY to the FUTURE

The term and the concept of 'Sustainable Development' had its origins in the United Nations in the 1980's, then defined as *"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*. This remains the generic definition.

It has become an issue of equity and how we in the real world can be persuaded to act in the common interest and for the common good in the use of natural resources and our use of natural, built, human and social capital, as distinct from narrow self-interest.

Sustainable Development had further evolved from the Earth Summit of 120 nations in 1992, to be expressed in the following principles:

- *Conservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity*
- *Sustainable use of natural resources*
- *Integration of economic, environmental and social considerations*
- *The precautionary principle*
- *Inter and intra-generational equity*
- *The polluter pays through the internalisation of external environmental costs.*

The concept has since evolved to become **Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)**. This contends that the economy is a subset of the natural world rather than the determining priority status it has been assigned.

The NSW Local Government Act, 1997 Amendment-Chapter 2, Section 7: (e) to require councils and councillors and council employees to have regards to the principles of ecologically sustainable development in carrying out their responsibilities.

Succinctly stated, ESD is that which can be ecologically, economically, socially and culturally integrated and sustained. It has become known as the quadruple bottom-line.

This quadruple bottom-line contrasts with the frequent relegation of ecological, social and cultural issues as externalities of the economy rather than within an over-arching ESD integrated framework of planning.

This bottom-line helps ensure we are not actively extending the past into the future.

Prof. Brendan Gleeson of Griffith University states, (SMH 19.1.07) – "sustainability and climate change issues now demand an end to planning convention and orthodoxy where they are addressed in muted and technological language". Use of 'green-wash' must also be dispensed with.

Chief Justice Brian Preston of the NSW Land and Environment Court (Warner's Bay 27.9.07) stated: "ESD principles are not separate entities but must be integrated, giving each equal weight and consideration... ESD is an elusive issue requiring a paradigm shift".

In this regard, none of our cities, towns and villages are yet sustainable, but a new Development Control Plan and subsequent Local Environmental Plan (2011) with statutory powers, will provide the Council, and Nelson Bay, the opportunity to introduce sustainable policy and to get it right.