

CORRECTED VERSION

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into sustainable communities

Melbourne – 9 August 2004

Members

Mrs A. Coote

Ms J. M. Lindell

Mr D. K. Drum

Ms W. A. Lovell

Ms J. T. Duncan

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Chair: Ms J. M. Lindell

Deputy Chair: Mrs A. Coote

Staff

Executive Officer: Dr C. Williams

Research Officer: Mr D. Fairbridge

Witness

Ms R. Leeson, acting director, sustainability and innovation, City of Melbourne.

The CHAIR — I formally declare open the Environment and Natural Resources Committee hearing on sustainable communities. I welcome Robyn Leeson, the acting director of sustainability and innovation from the City of Melbourne. All evidence taken by the committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, if you make comments outside the precincts of the hearing they are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence is being recorded by Hansard, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript within the next week or so. Could you make a presentation and leave 5 minutes or so for questions?

Overheads shown.

Ms LEESON — I have a short PowerPoint presentation to go through the main questions that were raised prior to coming here today, and some additional projects which I thought might be of interest in terms of the terms of reference of the committee.

First of all I want to say a few words about the integration of wastewater and energy programs. Some of the examples I have raised here include holistic rating tools for buildings in particular. I know that is an area of interest. We currently are using in commercial buildings the Greenstar rating tool of the Green Building Council. There is a plethora of rating tools available, but it would be useful to have a holistic rating tool for residential buildings as well so we get that integration across wastewater and energy parameters. Currently we have the five-star rating system for residential buildings that looks at energy, but to have something holistic would be very useful for residential.

We should look at training and accreditation across different areas in terms of trades. Traditionally the focus is on water and energy, but not necessarily both. Also, there is the crosschecking of programs between different agencies and local government. We see a lot of well-designed and useful programs that are run by one agency, but are not necessarily coordinated with very similar activities, programs and funding from other agencies. So a one-stop shop for those programs would be useful in the community where they were coordinated in some way and it was obvious what you applied to what sort of project or funding. An example of that is the federal government's Natural Heritage Trust. When that first started the average time it took to fill out an application was about 20 hours, which was quite a bit for a community person, a chair of a community committee, to commit to. It also required a fair bit of understanding of background work and research to be able to make that application.

I also want to mention education versus regulation, which was raised as a question by the committee as well. That is an age-old, how-long-is-a-bit-of-string type of question. Something that council is concerned with is the use of education and incentives as well as appropriate regulation to combine those things in an holistic program, where the program is planned, there is regulation to bring up worst practises, there are incentives to encourage people to go beyond best practice and to support them to help them do that. We are always concerned in council about looking for regulation to get the lowest performers over the hurdles, but also to encourage some beacons of best practice through some incentive, support and cooperation. An example might be the recent introduction in the white paper on water of block tariffs to send a pricing signal in terms of the consumption of water. I am assuming they have been carefully structured to reflect that sort of behaviour shift that the government might be looking for in terms of water consumption.

Involving the building trades is always a difficult one, and I think the building code has made some inroads in terms of new standards, and the plumbing code is following suit with some new standards to be introduced this year as well. We have worked a bit with the Master Plumbers Association on the Green Plumber program, which is a great training tool, but I think there is a lot more that can be done through professional associations and through the TAFE system with getting those sorts of awareness and training involved with the building trades. Again it is a notion of using the code to bring up a minimum performance and also having training and education to help push people who want to get involved in best possible practice into those areas and create themselves perhaps a niche business in the process.

In terms of existing dwellings providing a mix of mechanisms is really important. Programs around retrofitting of existing dwellings can be important as well. I will pass around a copy of a flier that we have produced on a program called GreenSaver, which is co-sponsored by City West Water and some other partners. It involves the green plumbers as well and doing audits and retrofits of existing dwellings in the municipality, and also getting some rebates for retrofitting of equipment. Residents can use this service, get a green plumber to come to the house and do an audit of the energy and water consumption in the house and then get some of the rebate back as a reward for

doing so. They can do the minimum amount of activity around a retrofit, or they could do quite large retrofitting around entire heating or cooling systems or installing rainwater tanks or grey water systems if they wish.

I have also mentioned the disclosure of energy ratings on titles. That is commonly used now in the ACT. One area that we find particularly difficult to engage are property valuers and the real estate industry in terms of green buildings. We have some good dialogue with larger developers in the city, architects and developers themselves, but valuers and the real estate industry seem to be a little more difficult to get involved and engaged in terms of sustainability principles.

I also want to raise the Sustainable Melbourne Fund, which was raised in the criteria. The Sustainable Melbourne Fund was started with \$5 million of council's investment. It is administered by a separate board of management, and it reports to council only on its financial performance, but it has to invest money based on triple-bottom line criteria — that is, the projects have to demonstrate some sort of social, environmental and economic return to the city plus make a financial return based on the existing parameters.

The first project is a payment-by-savings approach. We have legal agreements now with Yarra Valley, City West and South East Water, and we are still negotiating at the moment with a couple of large commercial partners. They would be auditing and retrofitting some large commercial buildings in the city, and then the fund would be paid back through the water bills as the money is saved. We are hoping that could be a demonstration project for other councils. The intellectual property around the development of the fund itself and the legal agreements that we are entering into with the water retailers will be made available to other local governments if they wish to pursue the same sort of model. I understand this project will be launched in the next couple of months depending on the minister's availability to be involved with that.

One other area I want to mention is fostering sustainable business opportunities. The example that I have used here is Cascade Point, which is a small company. It was recently arranged to take waste from the fish market. Up until recently the fish market was producing about 12 to 15 tonnes of fish waste a week and it was going to landfill. The City of Melbourne owns the wholesale fish market. Cascade Point is a new small business that is taking that fish waste and using it to create organic fertilisers and fish oils. They separate different species of fish to isolate different fish oils, therapeutic goods, such as shark cartilage and prawn shells, which sounds rather exotic, and they are exporting them for the therapeutic goods industry. They have an organic certification and they have contracts in Europe and are looking to export into Asia well. It is a great example of a new sustainable business in that sense. It is alleviating an environmental problem in terms of the waste from the fish market, but also creating some new jobs in that industry, creating and exporting and new business in Victoria as well even though it is fairly small to start with. That is the sort of business that we only hear about in stories. They are very difficult to find, and that is one challenge for sustainable communities and for government as well — that is, to find and foster those sorts of businesses, because they do not necessarily identify themselves as being overtly environmental or about sustainability. They tend to stay away from any sorts of advertising and the availability of information about funding and grants because they do not necessarily identify themselves as being in that particular role. They just tend to get on with it because it is a legitimate business opportunity.

In a similar way one other supplier in our supply chain is Cabrini Linen, which takes all the nappies and linen from our child-care centres. They do about 100 tonnes of linen washing a week, and they have reduced their water consumption by 55 per cent. They were nominated for the Save Water awards this year, and it has dropped quite significantly in terms of energy as well. One of the interesting things about Cabrini Linen is that it is an example of a values-driven organisation because it is based on the Cabrini set of Catholic values, but Cabrini Linen is a commercial offshoot of Cabrini itself and has to compete with other laundries. It has done so by reducing wastewater and energy in the process, by being quite competitive and living up to those sorts of principles.

There are two other projects that might be of interest to the inquiry. One is the Melbourne Principles on Sustainable Cities that the City of Melbourne was involved in a couple of years ago in the lead-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which was rehearsed at a meeting of the United Nations environment program also with the input of the EPA. Part of that project was to develop a set of key guiding principles for sustainable cities. Those principles were then endorsed by the floor of the local government stream of the world summit in Johannesburg as a central document.

There is another project that might be of interest, and I will pass it on again. It is the Global Reporting Initiative from Europe and we have been involved with it. Essentially it develops a set of guidelines for public reporting on

sustainability. You are probably familiar with the public reports done by companies such as Shell and BP, and more locally City West Water and Telstra. They are all using that framework for their reporting against their performance, and specifically their non-financial performance — that is, the social and environmental performance of those companies.

The Global Reporting Initiative approached us to be involved in the development of a public sector version of those guidelines. So the draft of that supplement is available for comment now, but the intention is that all public agencies across the world would eventually use this framework to report to the public on their sustainability performance, social and environmental performance. We have some good interest from the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the EPA so far and we hope other state agencies will get involved and that you will see the framework piloted in the coming year. I am happy to take questions on the presentation or anything in the submission.

Ms DUNCAN — You referred to the social marketing approach that is being developed. How does that vary from traditional approaches to changing behaviour?

Ms LEESON — From what I gather, there seems to be a spectrum between market and environmental education and the social marketing area and that has only just started to be fostered. We have had some workshops with Doug McKenzie-Mohr who seems to be an expert in this area, but it is a new and growing industry. The way it has been explained to me by my staff is that marketing usually is about convincing you to buy one brand of toothpaste over another, and that tends to be how we market ourselves and our products, whereas the social marketing angle is about convincing you to brush your teeth in the first place. People with that sort of background and skills are different to traditional marketing people. To define a sustainable marketing person is quite a difficult task, and they are things to find. That expertise is only starting to grow and become clear because mainly marketing has been about getting you to consume more whereas there is an obvious conflict in some ways between that and the environment and sustainability agenda. We are taking up different opportunities when we can, and that is evidenced in the way we have tried to market the GreenSaver program. For example, we have put some ads in the newspaper and sent fliers around, but we did not get a huge response. It was mainly when people started knocking on doors and having conversations that we got more interest. People were saying, ‘That is what it is about’, and ‘That is how you can help us’ rather than consumers picking up a brochure and putting it by the phone.

Ms DUNCAN — Just on that GreenSaver program, is it only available in the City of Melbourne.

Ms LEESON — At the moment, yes. We would be interested in handing the model on to other municipalities if they were interested.

The CHAIR — How large is the GreenSaver project?

Ms LEESON — It is still in its early days. I think we have done about 50 households so far. It is quite an intensive relationship for people to get involved in it because it involves monitoring your bills and letting someone have a conversation with a green plumber who comes to the house and by doing follow-up work. The program is funded partly by us and receives funding from the state government as well. We have a few different partners. CSIRO is tipping in resources as well.

The CHAIR — How is it evaluated?

Ms LEESON — Through the bills. That is why it is a long project in a sense. We are moving from reporting against what we used to consume — that is, outputs, which is being done by a lot of agencies — to outcomes. We used to report progress against how many signed up, but what does that mean in terms of sustainability? We need to have programs in place that evaluate what has been the real outcome so we get the first rush of water and energy retrofitted actually quantifying how much greenhouse gas and water has been saved through the program. I think that is what makes or breaks programs today.

Mr HILTON — I would also like to talk about the GreenSaver project. I suppose I have a number of questions. Fifty does not seem an awful lot in terms of the number of ratepayers in Melbourne.

Ms LEESON — No.

Mr HILTON — When you were developing the model you hit on a fee of \$70 with a rebate of \$30, which means a net fee of \$40. Did you give any thought to making it free, and then maybe people paying \$70 out of the savings?

Ms LEESON — I think we have talked a lot about free programs before. We wanted to keep some fee there. We have found with some of the programs we have implemented that if it is absolutely free then people sometimes tend to value it less and become less committed to it, so we did not want to make the fee so high that people would not participate. But if people are putting some of their own resources into a program they are more likely to see it through to the end. I think that has been something we have applied with our private sector partners as well. We have seen over the years that when it is free people perhaps say, ‘Yes, we will come on board because it is free’ and then they trail off pretty quick. Fifty houses is not a lot. We do have enough funding. We started the funding last financial year and it will continue right through the rest of this financial year, so we still have quite a way to go in terms of getting more homes on board.

Mr HILTON — I know it is only fifty, but do you have any idea as to the average investments the home would need to make to realise some significant savings?

Ms LEESON — No, not off the top of my head. It is still an early-stage project; we are not in a position to do a lot of evaluation to see how much of the retrofitting that the plumbers are advising is actually being taken up. But that is something we will be doing. I think in terms of what they refer to as the low-hanging fruit — —

Mr HILTON — Yes, I have heard that before.

Ms LEESON — Yes, it is a very big term — you can get a lot of savings, especially in the older parts of Melbourne. The areas where we have been targeting for this program are places like Kensington and North Melbourne, where there are a lot of older homes. So the notion of ceiling drafts and retrofitting some of the older plumbing equipment, we get some big gains from.

Mr HILTON — Is this restricted to the interaction between water and heating — under electricity — or could it involve central heating as well?

Ms LEESON — Yes, anything that involves use of energy or water.

The CHAIR — As to the disclosure of energy rating on titles, have you put any thought into how that would happen — who would pay for that and where the actual cost would be borne?

Ms LEESON — No, I only brought it up because it is standard practice in the ACT. They have done all the homework and the background on that. So no, I am not familiar with all of the research about how it is implemented and where the costs are. But it has been happening in the ACT for quite a while.

The CHAIR — Thank you for your time, Robyn.

Witness withdrew.

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Witnesses

Mr S. Ray, executive director; and

Ms L. Ramachandran, manager, programs and research, Environs Australia Projects.

The CHAIR — I welcome Steven Ray, the executive director, and Lalitha Ramachandran, the manager, programs and research, Environs Australia Projects. All evidence taken by the committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence is being recorded by Hansard, and you will receive a proof transcript in the next couple of weeks. Welcome, and thank you for coming. Would you like to make your presentation and then take questions from us, if that is okay?

Mr RAY — Thank you, Chair. If I could start by giving some background to our organisation so that you know what we do and what we have done in the past, and then speak specifically to some of the questions of the committee.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr RAY — Environs Australia has been operating for 15 years. We are a not-for-profit organisation. We initially began as the Municipal Conservation Association. We were a group that was set up essentially through the time the State Conservation Strategy was launched in the late 1980s, and there was provision in that for local governments to play a major role in on-ground conservation work with their communities. There were a number of state government-funded positions in the sector, and they essentially made themselves pretty indispensable during that time and over the next 10 to 15 years. We now have a situation where local government is a major contributor to environmental management throughout the state and throughout other states as well. So it is quite an interesting historical change that has taken place because now places like the Shire of Yarra Ranges, et cetera, have a whole directorate on sustainability and local government has firmly put its commitment on the line in terms of environmental repair and strategy.

As far as our organisation goes, there are actually two organisations: Environs Australia, the local government environment network; and Environs Australia Projects, the organisation Lalitha and I represent today. We as an organisation were established about 12 months ago to concentrate on cutting-edge projects and to really work with local governments that were keen to do some work in the sustainability area. We are based in Victoria, and we have a board, to whom we are responsible. The networking arm is now concentrated mainly on advocacy and membership and information exchange, and it works principally with the environment officers within the local government sector. That is based in Queensland.

Environs Australia Projects partners can collaborate on virtually all of the projects that we work on. We are actually a very small organisation; we have only four and a half people — that is not true, we have four, they are complete people, but we have 4.5 effective full-time positions. So by working alongside other similar organisations our capacity to achieve change is amplified considerably.

In recent times we have worked with organisations like City West Water, which is represented here by Lisa Coffa; EcoRecycle Victoria; the Western Regional Waste Management Group; and many different organisations — I suppose principally Vox Bandicoot, whom we co-partner on Sustainability Street. Our partnerships are notoriously difficult things to manage because it is hard to overcome the individual territories that drive every organisation. However, in our view the task of achieving sustainability is very complex and we must build partnerships between organisations that I call enabling organisations — those who work in the field of sustainability — and we must build connections between community individuals and create a cohesive society if we are to achieve all that is possible in a sustainable world. What I guess we are principally saying is that sustainability is not just about outcomes to do with the number of gigajoules you save or the volumes of water that you are able to divert from stormwater, or whatever it might be. Sustainability has to be about people and how you work with people, and it has to be about organisations and how organisations come together. That is relevant to what we are talking about, because it goes to the heart of the nature of the programs that will be effective.

There are a few specifics I will turn to now in terms of this inquiry. One of the main programs that we have been working on, Sustainability Street, for us has been a very revealing process. It has been going now for a bit over two years. It started out as a pilot program in a couple of municipalities, one in the Moreland City Council and one in the Wollongong City Council. We have since run a regional program out in West Melbourne, with 7 councils and 15 or 16 communities out there. It is a very interesting and challenging process.

I suppose what has come to light in all that have been a number of key points. There is ample research to show that people like never before are very time poor. We have seen that in a major way in dealing with people on the ground

who come out, or who do not come out, to community meetings. Ten years ago I remember seeing an article in the *Age* which said that people were working about an extra month longer per year. That was 10 years ago; I suspect that has crept out even more. There is also now a trend where people are beginning to down shift — that is a term I think coined by Clive Hamilton in the book *Growth Fetish* — and by far the most common answer is not ‘Good’ but ‘Busy’. I think just about everybody can relate to that. In fact I got asked the other day, ‘How are you Steve? Good and busy?’. So people are actually jumping to the answer already these days; they assume you are busy.

Alongside of this, people are being bombarded with information like never before. It is true we have all this wonderful technology which ostensibly is about trying to help us communicate better. I think we are in a very interesting or potentially dangerous transition period where that is not happening, but people trying to come to grips with the amount of information out there are doing something quite dangerous — that is, just skimming across all the information they receive and not actually being strategic in the way they deal with that information. They simply cannot do that. They respond as a result, and it is leading to some very interesting situations. Anybody who is on email — and I assume everybody here is on email — will be able to testify to interesting things that happen when people do not read their emails properly. I guess the message there is that people are really treading water; they are not really swimming when it comes to moving forward in a lot of areas.

A third important point is that people are consuming like never before. I really want to make the point that this is at all levels, and not just through physical products, which we have heard quite a bit about. It does not matter whether it is products or whether it is people or whether it is services or whether it is organisations — people are very quick to move to the next thing — For example, gone are the times that when you enter a job that was your vocation for your life. People are very quick to move on to the next job, and it is all about moving through and getting what you can from one job and moving on to the next.

The reason I make this point is that when we consider what the committee is looking at there is a real risk of the information on the programs that are out there at the moment also being skipped through and eaten through by people and organisations who are very quick to make sure that they are up to date with the programs and so on that they are involved in. People will say, ‘Oh, we have done that program; we are ready to do the next one’, when in fact the doing is actually what it is about. And it is also about making sure that the program improves. Understanding that and I suppose being part of that process, we have very quickly moved to making sure that our programs now have a component within them that strongly ensures that they are protected from that hunger that people have for moving through to the next thing.

It could be a bit like a country which, after a long time of military rule, said, ‘We tried democracy but it did not work’. We know that democracy is a very messy thing, but we do not give it up because it is a messy thing; we keep trying to improve it because we know it is a critical thing that we need in society. So democracy is something where we often fail it; it does not fail us. So the failing is perhaps of ourselves, which needs to be tackled, rather than the failing of a lot of these programs.

I talk about Sustainability Street because it has been one that we have worked on with a lot of people and they have provided their support; and not only that, they have become part of Sustainability Street. So while Environs Australia and Vox Bandicoot have been collaborators on this project principally, it has been one that has involved organisations like the Moreland Energy Foundation, as I said, City West Water, Yarra Valley Water — a whole lot of different organisations — and all those councils that have put in lots of goodwill. They have done it through a process where there have been lots of challenges to make the thing work. It is a very important program and there are a lot of other programs which are equally important.

The CHAIR — Sorry, we are having a problem with the recording equipment. Can you pick up where you were up to?

Mr RAY — We will start at Sustainability Street. I was mentioning that we have put a lot of time and effort into building the program because other people have shown such support for it. It is a very simple idea, but it is one that people are saying, ‘Gee, this might be an opportunity for people to change this whole thing that we are talking about — this march towards increasing speed of life’, which is just so intuitively unsustainable and yet no-one is talking about how we are going to slow it down.

I suppose we should provide a bit of background as to what Sustainability Street is. I suppose in its simplest form it is really an opportunity for people to come together around an environmental agenda. We have gone to councils

and together with them we have put on information nights where people are invited to come along and share their stories of what they would like to see in their local neighbourhood and what they would like to see beyond that as well. Unlike most council meetings there is not somebody up the front trying to duck and weave because there are all these people throwing questions about why this planning permit was approved, and putting council in that normal position where they have to defend a situation or they are in their classic role of being the regulator, which is a pretty lousy one for local governments and tends to be what they are known for.

In this case they are put in a role of facilitator of community change where they are saying to people, 'Come in, there is some wine and beer over there, a sausage sizzle over there, come in and sit down — we just want to hear what you have to say about this whole sustainability thing, what you think about it, what are your big problems, concerns, fears or whatever'. Because people just do not jump out and tell you, we actually get people to work in little groups. They start off throwing streamers — we were going to bring some streamers here today, but we figured you all knew each other so we did not — and you follow the streamer to the other side of the room and start talking to somebody. It just breaks down that whole thing of 'I do not know you, you do not know me'. It is really basically saying we have forgotten how to do this, we have forgotten how to go to the village well, because most of our time is now spent either in front of computers or televisions or just trying desperately to recover. That all goes to the heart of the social research that has come out of Robert Putnam and Hugh MacKay and others who have spoken about this idea of being time poor and people not coming together in groups any more. They do not play cards together, they do not play games of Monopoly — they will play games on the computer and they will meet each other on the computer, but there is this great breakdown that is happening.

Sustainability Street is about trying to almost remanufacture that whole getting people together, but it is around this most imperative thing which is survival of the planet by starting at the local level and saying, 'Here is what we are talking about: energy, waste, water — they are very basic things that everyone has an impact on in their daily life — what can we do on that front?'. People come together and whenever you have more than eight or nine people the amount of community knowledge is just astounding. We call it the communiversity. People say, 'I do not know anything', and they start telling you and it reveals that they actually know quite a lot and they know people who know things. Before long a good group will come together and they will be doing things like putting in grey water systems, as one group has done; they will be identifying schools and putting water tanks in those schools, as another group has done; or setting up a food cooperative where they can all come together and buy their dry food — that is another group again. Some groups just share vegetables across the back fence; they do it at a very low level.

Other groups are thinking much more further afield and they are actually resourcing themselves. These are not groups which need to have a handout from the local government. Perhaps initially they get some of the staff to get them spurred along, but eventually what happens is with enough time and enough resources these groups either become a fantastic teaching group themselves for the community — there is that whole peer learning thing that happens — or else they achieve what they wanted to achieve, which might have been tree planting or whatever, and then they dissipate. These groups come together and sometimes they really take off because there is an energy or sometimes they do their job and then they go on.

For us it has been quite exciting to see groups at one end doing all these amazing things. In groups at the other end people have just literally stepped off the boat and are trying to work out where they buy bread and they are trying to bring these people together around the idea of sustainability and understanding just how difficult it is for people to engage in any sort of community interaction at all. From our point of view, we came from this as a group which was really about the environment and now we are very much focused on that dual imperative which is not just about the environment but also about building communities. The environment will almost certainly go down the gurgler while communities are falling apart.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — I might just add to that point that, in particular, the biggest challenge but also the biggest opportunity we have discovered with some of the stuff we do through Sustainability Street is that provided the community is driving it they are actually getting much more ownership on the ground. Secondly, we always start from the assumption that you can apply the same thing to any community, but what we are finding is that every single one of these communities has different expectations, different capacities and different capabilities to actually get on board and do something. There is not really a time level that you can put on it in terms of, 'We will apply this for three months and it should work for 75 per cent of the communities'. It really depends on where they are at in terms of sustainability understanding and what they would actually like to achieve through that process. For a lot of them the initial achievement is around community. They come on board because they are

already doing some sustainability work but it is around building community, which has been a real eye-opener for us.

Mr RAY — It is about sharing cheese and wine — if they know they are going to get a feed at their friend's place, off they will go down there.

One of the points you made when we were not being recorded, Chair, was about this idea that people are craving a slowdown. I think that is something people have not necessarily intellectualised, but that is what they are feeling. When they come along to these meetings and they are sitting down with their friends they are realising that they are spending more time being present than at any other time. Most of their time is spent managing the panic that is their life — planning the days ahead when they are going to drop kids off to this and that and then coming back and organising a meal. Most of that time is spent not actually enjoying the moments that you have. That is one thing, when people are at Sustainability Street in their communities they are just there to do that particular thing. For us, the program has given us some big signposts about what is needed. Regardless of the program Sustainability Street has been a good signpost to some of these big concerns.

Lalitha mentioned this whole idea of community. I think a lot of the material — getting back to the terms of reference of the committee — that has been produced, and a lot of the initiatives that are out there, is targeted at individuals. They are often trying to get to the mass of the community and the material is therefore not tailored to particular community groups or whatever — it is like a billboard or a television ad. These things have very limited capacity to do anything, but, if you like, mine the social and environmental goodwill that is in there in the community now. I think they should be seen for what they are doing. They do achieve that to an extent: if people are already switched on, it will have some limited value. However, what I think has to be done a lot more is to identify those programs that are out there which are on about changing people. Unless you have an ongoing investment in building that level of social and environmental capacity in the community, those programs just will not work. People will drive past those billboards and they will not even engage with them because they are too busy engaging with the one about the Audi. They are consumed: because I want an Audi, that is why I remember that ad; it is not true, I do not want one of those. However, I find it quite interesting as you go down the freeway and you see certain billboard ads and what they are actually appealing to. They are appealing to this whole consuming pathology that is society at the moment.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — I will add to that too. I think the programs that target individuals tend to neglect some of the points we have just brought up, that we have discovered with Sustainability Street — that is, the peer learning that occurs between members of a community and the sense of neighbourliness, the fact that you might not be doing something alone. If you are putting in a waste management system and you are not too sure about how to use your bins, it is about being able to speak to your neighbour about it. If you are trying to sun dry your excess tomatoes for the first time and you are not too sure, you actually have that process of sharing knowledge. That has been a big part of understanding that programs targeted at individuals actually leave out a larger part of the landscape in terms of how the community acts as an essential resource in itself.

Mr RAY — One of the lines that we always talk about in all of this because it is such a good one — it describes where people are going with their communities, although this is big sort of reaction to it, this craving of a slowdown, as you put it — Robert Putnam coined in his book *Bowling Alone — the Collapse and Revival of American Community* that these days more people actually watch *Friends* than have friends. It is a bit of a frightening thought that most people are sitting there in front of the television after having worked a classic 12-hour day because they need some down time from that and it is not spent nearly as much with friends as it used to be.

One of the things that I alluded to before was the idea of building an evaluation program into Sustainability Street. We have built a strong alliance with Victoria University on that. It has been a fascinating process of discovery as we have gone through the whole Sustainability Street program working with councils and so on and understanding that if good programs are to survive they really need to have that continuous improvement, to put it into jargon, component put in them. Instead of being eaten through and tossed out the other end as a program, which was good but did not quite do what we wanted it to do, you build into it a process of evaluation which is hand in glove with the program itself, so that the work you are doing with the community is all about, in an invisible way, finding out from people why they make the changes they make, why do they suddenly feel connected to what you are talking about — feel passionate about going off and putting a grey water system in — when they did not before, all of those sorts of things. We really need to be finding out the whys before we are asking, 'What did you achieve in this program? How many gigajoules did you save?' Those questions are important, but if you only measure those

things you will not find the nuggets of gold within those programs. You might make assumptions about why that program delivered a benefit and you might miss a key thing that could potentially be replicated through all programs.

One thing that we wanted to commit to as part of this is trying to uncover some of that stuff which we know works within communities, through this alliance, and actually feed that back into government process so those people who are making decisions about applications that come in can say, 'Here are some criteria that we know, research tells us, is important for your application to have. You need to be doing it this way. When you are engaging with communities you need to be considering these sorts of elements. You need to be thinking about these sorts of things if you really want the program to work, you need to be collaborating, or whatever it is'. I think if we can do that we will have felt that the program has been a success whatever happens to it down the track.

Perhaps just three very quick last points, or three key things that we feel are important in a program of doing things for people. The first is this idea that people need to feel in control. That is one thing they do not feel at the moment, they do not feel in control. They feel like all this stuff that is coming at them is stuff that is way beyond their capacity. They are not going to go home and save five buckets a day if they feel they are the only person doing it — they could not care basically. It is just so phenomenally scary to think they have the water targets for Victoria on their back as one individual. That is a subconscious thing but when you get people together as a group they suddenly think they can take it on because we are a group of people and we share. Even if it is only shared by a dozen people there are people you are talking to beyond that who are also sharing that with you. The value of community and doing things in community just cannot be overstated. It can be understated — it certainly cannot be overstated. Once you get people in communities, not only do you get the benefit of people working in greater numbers — simply that — but you get the increased sense of control from people. You get increased passion — they actually believe they are going to make a difference — and the thing suddenly takes on a different perspective altogether.

Three things: control, ownership — at Sustainability Street we keep trying all the time to push it back down to being a program of the communities even though we are part of the process of designing the underlying structure — and meaning. The thing has to have some meaning to their life. This is where we were so impressed by City West Water when it initially came on because it had a clear view as an organisation. Even though they had a water goal they could see that it is not meaningful for a person to begin their day thinking, 'Okay, five buckets of water today, where do I start?'. They do not operate like that. They are doing a million things: they are doing the compost 1 minute, they are making sure the dripping tap is being dealt with, they are doing something with energy, and they are talking to somebody else on the phone about a program or whatever, that is what people do — they are multitasking all the time. It is simply meaningless to try to break these things down into unintegrated parts. What we have to try to do a lot more of is bring things together. That was a great piece of insight. Again, it is a bit like the whole importance of partnerships. As you partner, you bring together different agendas and it becomes a much bigger and more holistic agenda. Did we want to say anything else, Lalitha?

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — Just a few points in conclusion, which allude to some of the points or bring them together as a final offering, if you like. Most of the current programs we are seeing do not actually target behaviour change. Instead they target immediate and measurable reductions within the space of the programs. Once the program is over we do not know what is happening; we do not know whether people are actually maintaining those changes six months or a year down the track. To some extent it perhaps needs some viewpoint or some development of how we might actually look post program at what the evaluation processes are for the success, or how communities have changed or continue to change over a period of time. The second point I would like to make is that there is no testing of the effectiveness or maintenance of the level of change within a current participation group. The assumption is that many of the programs measured during sustained program activity actually provide long-term change, but we do not know that. The third thing — an important point again — is that many current initiatives assume that communities can participate in and verify the results of the project that might be designed outside their reference group. Then they wonder why the community has not taken the hook. To some extent it needs to be actually driven by the community in order for that hook to be created in the first place. Do you want to say something on cost effectiveness?

Mr RAY — Yes. I do not know who is responsible exactly for putting the terms of the inquiry together, but we felt the fact that the committee was confined by having to examine practical, low-cost initiatives was in fact such a nobbling of the potential for what is needed that we wanted to make a comment about that. If you want to save the world you do not ask, 'How much money have we got?'. You ask, 'What do we need to save the world?'.

And then you work at it by finding the resources. It is a very strange way of going about things to have that out the front. I find it insulting to be honest; not personally, but I find it insulting to the importance of the inquiry. I think there are far more clever ways to ask, 'How do we look at these things and look at ways also of them delivering an economic benefit or perhaps even a financial return that makes them therefore more useful?'. There are assumptions that if they are costly they will not be worthwhile. What this committee is studying is to me one of the most significant things that the government could be looking at. I find it very strange, to be honest.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — Maybe the question needs to be: what is the program effectiveness, rather than what is the cost efficiency of the program in relation to its effectiveness? If you put aside the initial cost of a behavioural change program, whatever that might be and whoever it might be targeted at, keeping in mind different communities require different resources and take more time or require more effort, once you have local sustainability behaviour being adopted by an active and interested community, the long-term, low-cost benefits are plenty, and they are there for all to see. We have seen it with the Wollongong communities, both the communities. They put on seven extra sustainability streets in the Wollongong City Council in New South Wales as a result of the initial 18 months of continuing activity by those two communities well after the program had its formal processes finished. It is the same with Moreland City Council.

Firstly, the multiplier effect through local ownership, demonstration and democracy is certainly appealing to larger and larger groups of local people. They are more capable as a group of using some of the second-tier tools and initiatives that might be out there, the things that we as organisations and state agencies put out like knowledge web sites; tools that might assist you to actually get there; audits, like eco-book printing; and probably the ultimate low-cost behavioural change that we are still measuring and hoping for. Maybe in four years we might be able to give a little more information on it. If that 18-month period of sustained activity after the program has finished continues to be maintained, what you are seeing is behavioural change fostered by a community that will by itself continue to sustain and empower how things are done locally for quite a long time to come.

Mr RAY — I think that is a most important point because what we are discovering is that the community development aspect of the program that we are involved in is actually high resourcing. It takes time to actually get this group of champions out there in the community, but once you have them you have them for life. You cannot put a price on what that is worth and how many people they talk to. If you can see it over the life of the program, then in terms of what is low cost, that might be a high cost in the beginning. One of the things that Sustainability Street could potentially be, for example, is like an urban Landcare movement because it is actually picking up on things people are really tuning into — just to emphasise that point.

Ms DUNCAN — Steven, what would you say are the characteristics of a sustainable community, and how can we build in indicators or benchmarks to determine whether that is the case?

Mr RAY — Whether the community is sustainable or not?

Ms DUNCAN — Yes, and how would you define sustainable community? What would be the characteristics of the sustainable community?

Mr RAY — It is a bit hard because you have communities within communities. Obviously a community that might in its own right have elements of a sustainable community would obviously be operating in a community which is fundamentally unsustainable in terms of the way we are currently living our lives and the way we are taking out more than we are putting back into the system — all that ecological footprint stuff. I guess a sustainable community would be one that is starting to address some of those global issues, but is also trying to do what it can at a local level.

In terms of indicators, some of the key indicators need to be obviously environmental: what are the achievements that people are doing at that small scale; what are their reductions in greenhouse emissions and water use? And all those classic environmental ones. That has to be measured at a time that that community is ready to be measured. It is pointless doing it at the beginning when they are just learning about this whole process. So there is that and then you have to somehow — and this is one of the reasons we are working at Victoria University because we know it is a very complex thing — start to pick up on other key things: how do you measure the value of a person's wellbeing; how do you measure a smile? I suppose that is the thing we are trying to grapple with. What is the difference between a person who is feeling so disconnected that they are prepared to gamble away the life savings of the family? Those sorts of things need to be done really methodically. Obviously in a small community they are

the sorts of things you would not see. You would not see that sort of destructive, self-destructive or community-destructive behaviour going on. You would see other creative things coming out of the community. You need to measure what this little community might be producing, what its net impact is in a whole range of ways, the number of people it is talking to in a positive sense, that people are being fired up, and how the families are responding to that because not all families will come in — it might be an individual going into that and bringing something back — and if that family is feeling safer or happier. It would need to be done very comprehensively.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — I would agree with that. There is also the question of what communities value changing over time as well as achieving certain things, and that is something very new for all of us in terms of measuring. We do not know that there are any measures at the moment, so that is one of the reasons we have started doing some of that work with the VUT.

Mrs COOTE — How many people would be involved with these 22 functioning Sustainability Street communities? How many people are we talking about here?

Mr RAY — It really varies because with some groups you will have groups of half a dozen as a core group of people, and then at the other extreme you will have groups like the Point Cook community which has basically the whole ratepayers and residents association there — it is over 1000 people. One which began in Hobsons Bay recently has 50 really passionate people. Moreland Sustainability Street has been going the longest and has amalgamated a couple of streets together. The street is conceptual. It does not have to be a street, it can be a football club or any sort of community. But that is geographic; it is one of four streets that come together. They meet often at the neighbourhood house or in people's backyards. It has a sort of floating group of about 10 to 20, it just depends on what they are doing. Some people are interested in planting indigenous plants; someone has a real thing about planting up all the nature strips. There are others who are just wanting to do the outreach into schools. It depends what is on the agenda at any point in time. It is a bit hard to know the total number of people involved in the program.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — It varies over time. In the core group you get this fluctuating group that comes in and goes out. We also have the ebb and flow, if you want, of the rest who might be partly connected and who want to come along to some things. Quite often the five or six core people may or may not represent all members in their families as well.

Mr RAY — We break the groups into four categories — clouds, rain, rivers and oceans — on the basis of the energy. A group will often be a cloud — a cloud because they are still forming; rain because they have started to do some stuff; rivers they are starting to flow and get out there; and oceans they are just making waves. It is an important thing for us to do because if you let them go and they just fell in a heap, then obviously you are failing them. With this regional pilot we did out in the west we actually put in some additional time to make sure we were able to give more time to those who were at the cloud-rain stage and to make sure we were out there working with them to see what could be done to make them more able to help themselves, because that is the ultimate thing, obviously, for them to feel like they can do it themselves in whatever form. To answer your question, I have no idea but it is 150-plus.

Mr HILTON — I would like to expand on Andrea's point. The numbers you are talking about in these streets do not seem large numbers as representative of a much wider community. Excuse my cynicism, but I sometimes think these projects attract the people who are attracted to those projects. You are not really reaching the people who, in your words, may be too busy and time poor, and who do not really see the environment as all that important — it is important but not all that important. If this committee is going to make some recommendations as to how to reduce the overall consumption of energy and water and be more efficient waste managers across the entire state, it has to be more prescriptive, if you like, as to the behaviours that it is wishing to achieve. I am not sure that Sustainability Street is a concept that is going to make much of an inroad into that objective.

Mr RAY — I welcome your question and your cynicism. Believe me, there have been plenty of questions about the way it operates. Our organisation has four and a half people but we actually operate with 15 or 20 other organisations, and our influence goes well beyond that. The same thing is happening within these communities. If you looked at the Moreland Sustainability Street group, it is a collection of, at any one meeting, 8 or 10 people, and it would appear not to have particular significant influence. But when you look at the work they are doing, they are touching hundreds of people in that community, and they are being clever about it too because they are saying, 'In terms of our own time-poor nature what is the best thing we can do?'. Somebody said, 'We should get into

schools'. The response was. 'What can we do in schools? None of us are teachers. What could we do that could be useful?'. One skill that they had was in tanks because they had all put in tanks. They said, 'Why don't we put a rainwater tank in one of the local schools and we will make sure Yarra Valley Water' — from which they had some initial funding — 'puts in monitoring equipment so that the kids can actually start to monitor some of this stuff themselves'. They have worked with the teachers so there is some thought going into the curriculum, and the kids are going home and they are talking about this stuff to their parents.

I guess there is the potential in that particular program for the outreach. This program is two years old and if we can get that sort of stuff happening at that end of the program, then I think that is where the real gold is to be had. When you start with a group of people there are four stages: mulch, sow, grow and harvest. Mulch is where they come together and they are just learning. They are a group of people around the table who say they do not know anything, but then you go around the table and you find people know lots. Then there is sow, which is all about, 'Let's start planning what we are going to do; what could we do with the skills we have around the table?'. As I mentioned, one group up north has a really strong grey water thing because of one guy there who is completely opposite to the person you mentioned in terms of the demographic; he has no connection with the environment at all, but loves coming together with these people. He has a plumber's mind and has put these grey water systems into people's houses because he can see that it will save a lot of water. But he is actually not very connected up. He is not what you would call your archetypal environmentalist at all. He is a very interesting case. We are seeing that in a lot of these groups. They are not your classic mouldy greenies in dreadlocks and open-toed sandals by any stretch of the imagination. But the program is still young. The oldest group is two years old, and their potential is yet to be realised.

My own sense of what could happen to a group with a program like this is that it gets to a point where people are actively joining because they are hearing a lot more about it. The thing has been very quiet. We have not gone out there and done the whole self-promotion thing, because we wanted to get the model right and there has been no sense that this has been a great way of going. But now that we have done it a couple of times as both an individual and a regional pilot it is now quite clear that the most powerful use of resources is to get the people to resource themselves. They are so passionate about it if it works that they go out and do it, and you do not have to resource it. They will self-resource. It gets back to this whole thing: what is the most cost-effective way? It is by making sure that that people are completely passionate about the thing, and Sustainability Street does that. People share stories in their very first meeting of these beautiful places they have been to in the bush and just about every single person has a story to share, even if they have not gone out to the far-away bush and it is just in their backyard. These are things that have moved them that they have been connected to at one time and that is the thing, hopefully, it will lead to.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — Also, we admittedly work with the early adopters of sustainability. As with most programs that are voluntary you have to have some interest in it before you can come to the fore and actually take it on — say what is this really about, is it going to show me anything and will I get anything out of it? In the longer term, dealing with change, it is a good question: to what extent can a program like Sustainability Street —

We make the assumption there is continually new and different stuff coming out that would actually start to look at behavioural change in much the way that we are looking at it and that a combination of that and possibly incentives for the public to adopt certain ideas or positive regulation might be a great way to go. In terms of assuming that great numbers of people get what it is about if you do that, certainly from a local government perspective we talk about waste being a huge success story, but we also have plenty of examples of just councils doing a survey of your average street bins on an average day, and it is very clear that most people have not got the recycling message, it is just that they have three bins now. Some of that might go into the paper and some of it might go into tins and bottles, but you still get a lot of people dumping what you would see as stuff that is very easily diverted from landfill going into green bins.

Mr RAY — One final comment on that, because it sparked something else in my mind — which has now gone completely out of it, I am afraid!

Mr DRUM — While it is coming back, because it will always come back when you do not need it, I am impressed with your idea. We are about trying to work out ways that we can change behavioural patterns or change peoples' behaviours. It sounds to me that you are telling us that we have to be targeting existing groups within our communities so we have to get into the schools and also the sporting clubs, the arts clubs, the Probuc clubs and

every group we can get into, not just because we are going to touch more people but because these groups in our community offer a back-up system, resources; so when people all of a sudden lose their initial enthusiasm they have someone that they bump into in their weekly involvement that gives them another little rev along and that continues that encouragement. It is a very strong message. It is honest. Rather than directing perhaps individual incentives for buying a certain washing machine where you are in once you do it or you do not, this whole thing is about ongoing within the communities that people already live in, trying to capture their imagination, their enthusiasm and then heading down that path.

Mr RAY — Exactly. I think you can work with a lot of groups that have been around for long time in Rotary clubs as you have mentioned. That is one of those things that I mentioned. You have mulch, sow, grow, harvest, the four stages of Sustainability Street. Grow is where they do are doing stuff and harvesting is where they are getting out and talking to people and doing that outreach. We do not imagine there will be millions of Sustainability Streets necessarily, but one Sustainability Street can touch dozens of community groups just by going out and spreading that message.

I would be cautious of putting a lot of resources into things targeting these groups, because what will be more powerful is that peer-to-peer thing, a person from the street coming into Rotary and saying, 'I am thinking of joining; I am part of thing called Sustainability Street, I reckon we should really get into it'. That is not a top-down thing; it is what has been termed a Coles car park conversation. The reality now in society is that people just do not trust anybody. They do trust, but they trust fewer and fewer. They trust the government less. They do not even trust sports people any more. It is interesting, isn't it? The whole sports world has been pulled down over the last 12 months. What they do trust is the conversation they have with somebody they know or even remotely know when they are in the car park coming out of doing the shopping, so it is all about trying to identify with that person. If you are going to get into community groups, we encourage that whole peer-to-peer approach because it seems to us to be the most powerful thing.

When we went out to the regional communities in western Melbourne we always had someone from the Moreland Sustainability Street come out, and they volunteered happily because they were getting so much fun out of it. That was where the message was solved. It was not solved by Environs Australia or Vox Bandicoot or City West Water getting up, it was Jason Cox getting up and saying, 'Look, you are probably a bit like me. I went along to one of these meetings and I could not understand it, I still did not know what was going on, but I got excited by some of the things they were saying and we got together and they just described what they had done', and suddenly all the people in the room come alive because they say, 'You are the same as me, I feel that that'. So it is that whole empathy approach and it is very powerful. That is why in those good education programs you see you have what we call 'a trusted other' doing that, and it used to be your Kieran Perkins or whoever — surely you can trust a sports person! That has obviously worked well in the past, to get somebody who is an iconic figure.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — The other side of that, following on from that, is that for a lot of people, knowing that it has grown locally, it has become a source of pride. When your community gets together and you make those connections between the global and the local and you are achieving at the local level it gives huge meaning to what you are doing in the first place and a huge sense of achievement and that seems to be I suspect another major motivating factor that we are seeing with the initial pilots.

Mr RAY — I remember what I was going to say: Sustainability Street in some ways is nothing more than a glass that you pour water into. The glass is the community, you are bringing these community groups together who are now hungry for things that are out there — how do we do water waste, whatever. Eco-foot printing is a classic example of a brilliant idea that the EPA is getting behind. We want to say that is a great program. Sustainability Streeters would love that because you suddenly have a reason to cut your waste by half or whatever it is because it is about how many earths do we want to be responsible for as a group? So we are getting back to your question about what is a sustainable community. Hopefully that eco-foot printing tool would be a good way of saying it at an environmental level at least — if we are saying our goal as a community is for everybody out here to live their life as if there is only one earth, because there is only one earth, so our impact should be what is required to do that. These tools that are out there exist — and that is only one of them — but they often do not have anything to hook into. Sustainability Street or other things could equally play that role for these good things that are out there.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — School budgets, school communities — very effective.

The CHAIR — I have one question and that is a fairly blunt one. What are the costs involved in running a Sustainability Street program?

Mr RAY — I am unable to answer that. It varies according to the community and the council's role and what you want to put into it. If you were to do the very raw training program with one community and get them all the way through and have them up and running we are putting a figure — if you want to do it a bucketful as opposed to a cupful approach, in other words, if you want what will get you the best outcomes — in the order of about \$15 000 to \$20 000 a community for the resources, the training, the follow-up and maintaining the program.

Ms RAMACHANDRAN — It also assumes some other support mechanisms we have already put up.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into sustainable communities

Melbourne–9 August 2004

Members

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Witnesses

Mr R. Palmer, manager, infrastructure and environment; and

Ms E. Chapple, environmental project officer, City of Port Phillip.

The CHAIR — I would like to welcome Rob Palmer, manager, infrastructure and environment, and Emily Chapple, environmental project officer, from the City of Port Phillip. All evidence is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, if you make comments outside the precincts of the hearing they are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence is being recorded by Hansard and you will receive a proof version of the transcript in the next week or so. Could you go through your presentation and leave some time for questions from us.

Mr PALMER — We appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee. I have a short presentation dealing with the programs that form the basis of our submission which I will go through quickly.

Overhead shown.

Mr PALMER — For those of you who are not familiar with it, the City of Port Phillip takes in the suburbs along the bay from Elwood to Port Melbourne. It also includes East St Kilda and South Melbourne — approximately 80 000 people. The two programs that formed the basis of our submission were Sustainable Living at Home and Sustainable Traders, two separate programs. One is aimed at residents obviously and the other at small to medium-sized businesses. The program goals, very broadly, are primarily for us to look at some kind of sustained behaviour change in both of those demographics with residents and with businesses. We are also looking at the opportunity of strengthening communities where that is possible, so changes to behaviour in terms of the environment and better outcomes for the environment; but I guess it is always the intent of any of our programs to look at other opportunities as well. In terms of social cohesion we look at sustainability across four areas — economic, social, cultural and environmental, so as much as possible we try and combine those approaches and look for outcomes that address as many of those as possible. But the obvious intent of these programs is environmental. The Sustainable Living at Home program addresses five key environmental themes primarily through a seminar-type structure with participants. Each theme is addressed separately. The other thing we look for is to make a difference in the household action plans that are attached to each theme. We look for outcomes in each area for the program overall, but each household also develops an action plan within each of those themes.

Ms CHAPPLE — With the budget figures, this is our fifth series and we currently have 183 households participating. We normally get about 150 and this year was quite popular so we allowed it to go over and we already have the waiting lists for the next one; our previous one had 150 households and we expect to keep that number up.

Mr DRUM — Do you have a limited amount and therefore the more houses, the less you can spend, or do you simply go over your budget?

Ms CHAPPLE — Both these programs have had external funding sources so it depends on what we have in terms of funding.

Mr PALMER — Broadly speaking they are the program goals which we have touched on already.

MS CHAPPLE — These are specific ones for the Sustainable Living at Home program and this is what we are trying to get out of it, and then that flows on to the goals that we are getting the households to set for themselves:

Mr PALMER — I guess an important aspect of this program for us is being able to measure the results so the program has these objectives which we then measure against, but we look for changed behaviour that produces a result in each of those areas — water usage, waste, greenhouse gas emissions. We also have a program target for participation in events which is the primary mechanism of getting the information and forming the household action plan so we have a target of 60 per cent participation in those events.

Ms CHAPPLE — To get these measurements we are using the ecological foot printing process, and we have used it for the last series and for this one. We get the residents to do a footprint when they first start and we have incentives along the program for things like worm farms, globes, water audits, shower timers and calico bags to give them different ideas of how they can get these reductions. At the end of the program they submit another ecological footprint and we see how they go against the program targets. Individually they do their household action plans and within that they need to set short-term, mid-term and long-term goals which they can achieve.

Mr PALMER — One of the problems we had with the first three programs was that lack of measurement, so using the ecological footprint has given us the mechanism for before and after snapshots of progress in each household that has participated.

Ms CHAPPLE — This is a snapshot of the results from series 4. We managed to pretty much meet all our targets. I have broken greenhouse down into the different areas because that is similar to how they do it in the footprint and calculated the average — that is, the average tonnes saved per household. We did not have the participation target for that program; we brought it in for this one. Also we are encouraging people to think of ways that they can work in their community to reduce the overall footprint by participating in activities with the eco-centre and one of the local nurseries to do some water quality data, some plantings and so on as well so they are not only doing things for the household but also for the Port Phillip community in general to reduce our overall footprint as well.

Mr PALMER — We are especially pleased with the increase in public transport, which is very high, partly because as an incentive to begin with we offered some free public transport tickets. The hope is, of course, that that will lead to sustained behaviour change in terms of transport. We know of one participant who sold her car after participating in the program. She found that she could in fact do quite well without her car.

Ms CHAPPLE — As I mentioned before, traders have also predominantly been funded externally, more so than Sustainable Living at Home. That originally fell under VSAP funding and it has now got community action funding. We target traders in the area, trying to improve their environmental sustainability, which has been a really hard sell because obviously their no. 1 incentive is to save money. We often go in with that initial spiel and we have used the eco footprint to an extent where it can be used, with offices and that. We provide a number of options across a number of environmental areas, similar to the Sustainable Living at Home themes. The way we sort of sell it is we give them marketing opportunities, they will have financial savings and then there is the environmental message. This time around our goal is to get 200 traders on board out of approximately 2000. We think that is a reasonable figure, given how we go about the project. We also sell it in precincts, so we will target and, say, Middle Park, and try to get them all on board with a message which they can sell to their residents as a whole. So this time it will be predominantly based on greenhouse emission measurements through the community action funding.

Mr PALMER — I guess just on that, we have run a program similar to this a number of years in a row. This year we are running it again around all those same themes. However, what is different is that we have a different source of funding this time around. It has been funded through the Victorian Stormwater Action Program in previous years, but that source of funding does not exist. So this year, as Emily said, it is through the community action fund. The measurement, however, is different. VSAP was around waste management and litter minimisation; this time it is about reducing greenhouse. So for us it is a matter of, I guess, tailoring the program depending on the source of funding and the measurement that is required.

This slide shows just some of the barriers that we are confronted with these programs and others. We are continually looking at what sources of funding might be available to be able to run these programs. Sustainable Living at Home is an exception in that the traditional sources of funding that enabled us to get the program up and running are no longer available. This year it is being funded almost entirely by council. Although, having said that, that did come at the cost of one position within that work group. It was basically a choice between programs and people and the program was considered important enough to maintain, but we had to find savings elsewhere to be able to do that. For other programs, though, we continue to be reliant on funding and we find that — you will probably hear this over and over again — funding is often available in the early stages of a project or program that demonstrates some kind of innovation. I guess, though, if that project turns into a longer-term program that seems to be achieving something then it is much more difficult to find ongoing funding for that project.

This slide lists some of the things that we are looking at in terms of future opportunity. For getting the message out there, we are looking at different communication media. We have found that as a follow-up to Sustainable Living at Home a lot of participants have wanted something else to go on with, so we run a series of seminars on environmental issues that are open to them and to the broader community, which have been quite well attended. So that is a good way of getting the information out there. But we are looking at other maybe Internet-based opportunities as well.

Subsidies that encourage people to take up sustainable technology are something that we would like to explore, although what we are able to do is limited. I guess that will be the focus of this committee — seeing how that might

be encouraged. We are sort of playing around with some ideas at the moment. We have not got too many concrete directions yet, but we are looking at how we might encourage not just residents but commercial and industrial precincts to adopt more sustainable practices, trying to look at ways we might be able to fund, say, initial energy audits for large commercial buildings. But then it will be a matter of looking at what capital investment is required by that business, and immediately they will ask what the payback period is. So we will look at assisting them at the planning of that and the initial audits on energy and water.

Mr SEITZ — On the issue of planning of new developments, with warehouse apartments and things like that, is consideration given to solar heating and open-style living? I always shudder at the airconditioning and heating facilities for these. Is anything like that included in your programs?

Mr PALMER — Yes. Not in the programs that we have just highlighted, but there is a sustainable design policy with council. What comes with that is the sustainable design scorecard. As part of the planning application developers are encouraged to look at sustainable design in a whole range of areas and to basically self-assess and look at how to get the highest score possible from the sustainability point of view. That is energy, looking at opportunities for recycling grey water, rain water harvesting — what else is there, Emily?

Mrs COOTE — Inkerman Oasis.

Ms CHAPPLE — That is part of it. We have actually got a scorecard and it currently has voluntary status, but they are trying to get it worked into the planning provisions so it is necessary for everyone to complete.

Mrs COOTE — The development that is going on encapsulates all those things.

Mr PALMER — That is right. I guess Inkerman Oasis was a first attempt, but now we are actually trying to encourage that to be replicated as much as possible. The last I heard from planners was that developers are surprisingly keen to get a high score on the scorecard, even though it is voluntary. It seems to be embraced more than expected.

Ms DUNCAN — Are the positive outcomes that you listed, about reduction in greenhouse gases and water consumption and all that after people have gone through that program, measured immediately after their completion, and do you then perhaps look at going back to some of those people and seeing if that is sustained over time?

Ms CHAPPLE — Yes. That is something we will do. The Sustainable Living at Home program is for six months, so we are looking at going back to the Sustainable Living at Home group no. 4, who were the first people to do the footprint, probably at the end of this year. That will be 12 months since they did their original footprint and six months since they finished their program footprint. We will be able to see if they have sustained that over the past six months without actually being part of the program. The ones that we had on the slide are the very first footprint versus the ones straight after the program was finished, in that six-month period. We have not had enough time elapsed to get a good idea.

The CHAIR — That was my first question. Added to that are the people you are now going to reassess in another six months. Do they know that is going to happen?

Ms CHAPPLE — Yes. We have discussions with them about the process. It is voluntary — they do not have to do it. We do have incentives to encourage them to do it and also we keep in touch with them quite regularly because with the other seminar series we have run for past participants we are in contact with them on a monthly basis.

Mrs COOTE — Port Phillip is in my electorate; my office is in Bay Street. The City of Port Phillip is really innovative and has a whole range of programs and I am really proud to see all the things you do. I am particularly interested in the transport. I was interested in the figures that you put up, with the 118.8 per cent change. I know that you have had deputations overseas to see what you could do, you have also increased the parking fines and permits and a whole lot of other things like that. You spoke about the successful household action plan. Could you be really specific about what the transport element of that would be? What would be a successful household action plan for transport, in your view?

Mr PALMER — I guess the immediate things are commuting to and from work, but also an awful lot of short trips are carried out by car, so encouraging walking or cycling for short trips. Emily might want to add something to this, but certainly an action plan that would involve thinking: when I need to go to the local shop I will walk instead of taking the car because it is only 500 metres — or something like that. So specific actions of that kind.

Ms CHAPPLE — Just with the measurement, why the public transport one looks so good is that you have so many people who are doing no trips and when we sort of push the message to them, if we can get them doing two public transport trips a week, we see that as quite a good start. We also are able to capture the petrol data as well in terms of what they are bringing down. So we would expect that when we capture the data that a good result would be someone who has increased their trips by, say, three a week and also reduced their petrol at the same time. Otherwise, if they were only increasing the trips but not actually reducing their petrol, then it would — —

Mr PALMER — Just travelling more.

Mrs COOTE — A lot of people go through Port Phillip to get into the city and also on a weekend and for things like the St Kilda Festival, when you get a heap of people coming in, and because it is a big tourist precinct as well. Do the local residents who have taken up on this get cross with these people who are coming in and being very high users of vehicles into the area, considering that they are trying to reduce the footprint? Is that feedback that you get?

Ms CHAPPLE — I think the strongest feedback is actually about the transport system in the Port Phillip area, just people who are wanting to get from, say, Port Melbourne to St Kilda and the ease of how it can be done. So that if they are down in, say, Beacon Cove and they want to get to St Kilda, apart from walking they have to catch different trams. That is probably the strongest feedback we get in terms of the way the systems work — there are limited buses on Sundays and all that sort of stuff comes ahead of the tourist.

Mr HILTON — I was trying to work out the percentage, given the number of people who have volunteered to participate in these programs. I would suggest it is probably about 2 per cent of the households in Port Phillip. What do we do with the other 98 per cent? How do we get them to change their behaviour? Secondly, all councils are taking an interest in this area and each has different programs. I am just wondering how effective that is and whether the state or federal government should be actually determining what behaviour change is required and implementing policy to force that change, rather than just relying on people's interest, when, as I said to the last witness, the people who volunteer for these programs tend to be the ones who are informed anyway and we really want to be reaching the other 98 per cent who either are not informed or do not care?

Mr PALMER — I guess in response to your second point, probably partnerships between local government and state government or with federal government may be the way to get a more broad-based approach to some of these issues. In response to your first point, that is an issue that is exercising our minds quite a bit at the moment, understanding that whilst we see it as a successful program we are really asking how we can reach much more of the community. We know that is not easy — if it was easy someone would have the magic answer already. One of the things that we are hoping to do is look at the people who have participated in the program, those who have volunteered, who are the early adopters, but being able to tap into the social infrastructure that these people represent so that the behaviour change might be a little more self-replicating. We have not actually actively pursued that, but we are at a point now where we would actually like to see the results of Sustainable Living at Home a lot more broadly based than with just that narrow group of volunteers who are already committed and on board. So it is how to reach the broader community that is exactly what we are asking ourselves now.

Ms CHAPPLE — Just to add to that, the first couple of series of Sustainable Living at Home was very much the early adopters, but we have found and we have developed — and I think it has come through Port Phillip planning at the same time — different marketing tactics of the way that we actually pitch the program and that. The current people are a quite diverse group of people, a lot of whom had no idea really about the environment. We have certainly built up a reasonably good reputation for the program, based on word of mouth, and we get a lot of people subscribing that way. We have made it easier to come on board via the Internet, which gets a lot of people on board; and with our enviro events, which are our sort of secondary seminars, we are capturing a lot of people who do not have the time — they do not want to do Sustainable Living at Home, coming to a six-months series, but just have an interest in a couple of different areas. So we are certainly trying to broaden it.

Mr HILTON — The council has given this project a budget, which I think was \$44 000. There is a limited number of programs that you can run with that size budget, obviously. I think you said it was \$240 per program. That is again imposing a limit on the number of people who can participate. If the rest of the population who desire to participate cannot, I am just wondering what the long-term effectiveness of that is in changing the behaviour of the whole population of Port Phillip?

Ms CHAPPLE — Realistically, we have 180-odd households this time round. I guess there are probably about 30 now sitting on the waiting list for the next one. I think most people who have shown an interest have the opportunity to participate. I think it works because of the fact that it is only a six-month program. We still manage to hold their interest to come on board if the place is not available. It is not only on the finance side of things that we are limited. Our facilitator works very well, but in order to get the social cohesion working in a group you cannot have a massive group and we do not have the facilities to hold them, either. I think there are benefits in keeping it to a reasonable size so that they get that social part of it as well.

Mr PALMER — Certainly your point is taken, that if we had a very high take-up rate for some reason, at a cost of \$244 a household we would soon reach a point where we could not afford it. That is why we are looking at how a program like this might be more broadly based in its effect and be sustainable. It has to rely on people voluntarily adopting or accepting that behaviour change is necessary and important for other aspects of their lifestyle. Just in terms of recruitment, the reason that I was talking about tapping into the existing social networks of these people is that the program is growing primarily through word of mouth, in spite of other ways that we have of promoting the program. The key way that we recruit is through word of mouth. Secondly, in terms of surveying participants, the thing that they value most is the opportunity to meet and socialise with other people. Therefore, longer term a way of capitalising on the effect of the program and making it more broad based is understanding that it is through social connection and social cohesion that we will be able to achieve that.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your evidence this afternoon.

Witnesses withdrew.

CORRECTED VERSION

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into sustainable communities

Melbourne—9 August 2004

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Witness

Ms T. Ha, campaign development manager, Planet Ark.

Ms HA — I assume that today I am giving you an overview of Planet Ark. It is a Sydney-based organisation so it has always been a little bit New South Wales-centric, and one of my missions is to make it less Sydney-centric. I am also guessing that this is probably the first face-to-face contact you have had with Planet Ark, so I will give you a lot of fairly general information. I probably will not go into too much depth on any specific campaign unless there is a particular interest, and then there is the book titled *Greeniology*, which, of everything we do, is probably the most relevant to Sustainable Living at Home.

The CHAIR — I just need to let you know a couple of things first. Firstly, I welcome you here today. All evidence is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review, but if you make comments outside the precincts of the hearing they are not protected by parliamentary privilege. Hansard is recording all evidence today and you will receive a proof version of the transcript in about a week or so. Having said that, please show us the show bags.

Ms HA — Coming along today, I was not sure what to expect, so some of this will probably not interest you, but the first page of the booklet in your show bag is an overview of Planet Ark; the second page includes some reviews of *Greeniology*; the third page is some shameless self-promotion and one of the more interesting reviews of the book which talked about something called 'The tragedy of the commons', which I think you will find interesting. I have also included a leaflet, which talks about our plastic bags campaign, to see particularly coastal townships go plastic-bag free. Also, National Tree Day has just been and gone, and that information is part of the pack; and we have also done a printer cartridge recycling program, and this is a copy of one of the press kits that we sent out. Finally, just for the fun of it, I have included a little 'Butt for butts', which is part of the cigarette butt campaign. Just to give you an outline of my work, I work for Planet Art as basically the outpost Melbourne office, but I also do a little bit of freelance writing and some consulting on the side. Obviously the bulk of Planet Ark's work goes through the muscle of the Sydney office, so I did the Venn diagram you can see on the screen now, just to show that there is a huge area where we overlap, but things that we do side by side as well.

You have probably seen Planet Ark advertisements such as National Tree Day or the Christmas card recycling program. We are basically a not-for-profit environment group, and we aim to show people the ordinary, everyday ways in which they can help reduce their impact on the environment, whether it is at home, at work, or at school. We are funded largely by corporate sponsorship, with a certain amount of government funding as well. It is fairly small at this stage, and there is a small line of products from which we attain a royalty, such as laundry powders and those types of products. We decided not to be membership-based when we started because Jon Dee and Pat Cash, who started Planet Ark, recognised that if we asked for membership we would be basically cutting across the funding base of other groups such as Greenpeace and so on. We could see, because Planet Ark aimed to be positive and proactive, non-confrontational and non-political, that there was potential for us to get corporate sponsorship, whereas it is vitally important for a group such as Greenpeace to not have corporate sponsorship because of the way they are structured and the way they stand to work. Pat Cash is more often in the news for non-green issues than green issues, but he and Jon started Planet Ark as Greenpeace members because they felt at the time that a lot of people were watching television news, and seeing the protesters and so forth, and understanding that there was a problem with the environment, but not really knowing what to do next.

We also recognise that you might have 5 per cent of people who really relate to the idea of protest and activism, but that many people who are uncomfortable with it still care about the environment. Planet Ark's reason for being is to try and reach those people who are perhaps more armchair environmentalists, who would not feel comfortable protesting, and who do not want to stand in front of a bulldozer, but who do genuinely want to be part of the environment movement. Our opinion has always been that there is a danger that by asking people to do all or nothing, you alienate people who could be doing something real and measurable to help the environment, even if it is just using energy more wisely. If you say to someone, 'You must do this, this and this or you are not a real greenie', then you are excluding a lot of people who could be making a difference. We often say that we are defined by what we are for, not what we are against; so rather than going up to people and saying, 'You are doing this — bad, bad, bad!', we say, 'Why don't you try this as an alternative?'. We also believe in giving credit where credit is due and applauding people who are doing the right thing, because it is how you bring about change.

I have a very motherhood approach to this. I have an eight-year-old and a nine-month-old, and if I keep saying, 'Bad, bad, bad' to the eight-year-old, sooner or later she throws her hands up and says, 'This is all too hard.' And that is what we have seen in the environment movement. A lot of the time people do not listen to the environmental groups because they feel that the message is, 'This is not good enough. The government has to change this',

whereas there has not been a 'People are doing such and such, we are achieving things, and that is great; now let us capitalise on our achievements and move into another area' — so it is a motherhood approach.

The current campaigns that we are running include the plastic bags Just say no program. In that context we are encouraging people to use reusable calico or green bags instead of plastic bags. We did call for a levy to be tried in Australia because we had seen a lot of awareness programs, and we are probably all in agreement that awareness is one of those words that has been used way too much in the environment movement. We can be very aware and still quite harmful to the environment. We called for a levy, and just that call for a levy without one actually being introduced has made a huge difference to the way we are using plastic bags. You only need to walk down the street to see people with green bags around you, and that was not obvious a few years ago. I know I no longer get that pull of the face by the checkout girls when I bring out my reusable bag now.

National Tree Day has just passed. I do not have the figures back yet, but for the previous year we had 247 000 volunteers plant about 2.3 million trees during the Schools Tree Day and the National Tree Day. One of the most important things about National Tree Day is not the seedlings that go in the ground but the feeling that people take home. We are hoping people who participate on the day go home with that sense of achievement that they can make a difference. They then might consider signing up for green power or they might recycle a bit more because they have had that sense of being part of something bigger.

Cards for Planet Ark is a similar thing. Christmas cards are not the biggest waste issue that we have in Australia by any stretch of the imagination, and this campaign is run for the educational value. We could see, a long while back, looking at overseas trends, that recycling was going to diversify from kerbside council recycling programs; that there would be more retail-based product take-back programs. The Cards for Planet Ark was a fun way to introduce that behaviour of people taking something while they are shopping and putting it into a recycling bin. With Cards for Planet Ark the other educational value there was that we had Coles supermarkets as a partner, and the products that the cards are made into go back to a supermarket, so that link of taking the cards to the supermarket and seeing those recycled cards on the shelves in the form of toilet tissue and cereal box packaging is valuable. Some people called recycling 'an act of faith' because they put things into the recycling bin, but after that it is 'a mystery' as to what happens to them. There was a lack of understanding as to what happened next.

There was also a lack of understanding in terms of buying recycled products. We always encourage people to buy these recycled content products so that they can finish the recycling they started through the program. In Australia that is something we have seen as a problem in that when the state government set its reduction in waste to landfill targets and started pushing recycling it was like a simple supply and demand system. We were pushing the supply side. There was plenty of recycled feedstock coming through, but the demand was not being created, so at Planet Ark in particular we have seen a great need to promote buying recycled products so that we can economically drive the recycling industries.

National Recycling Week is a program we run each November. We run it as a media campaign in partnership with local councils. We send them information kits and invite them to get involved. We give them media releases, graphics materials, sample media kits, and the biggest benefit that councils find through this is that they get to be part of a broad national campaign. With one individual council it is very unlikely that they would buy a TV advertising campaign. They do not have the same kind of avenues open. If you talk to the metropolitan councils you are looking at just their local paper because if they did radio interviews and so on it might confuse people in other council areas who are also listening to that radio program. So there are just not as many media outlets open to each council. But we tell the councils that we will be doing this at a national and state level, we will be focusing on general recycling concepts like recycling more, buying recycled products and so on, and the councils do their own campaigns that complement it. So hopefully people are seeing the TV community ads for recycling week, and then they see something in the local paper about what their specific council is doing, and it is more effective because it is being talked about in a number of ways.

Finally, we are targeting e-waste. We have our cartridge recycling program that invites people to recycle printer toner bottles, or any consumable imaging equipment. They can be taken to Australia Post outlets. Again, it is a retail take-back program. It is also part of the product stewardship agreements of a lot of the original equipment manufacturers, and we have developed that in line with the recommendations of the European Union for electronic goods, and the recommendations in North America as well. We hope that will be a role model for processing e-waste both here in Australia and overseas as well.

The web site www.RecyclingNearYou.com.au is an online searchable database of local recycling services. You type in your postcode and you will get a list of what your council recycles, as well as other things like plastic recycling facilities at supermarkets, the outlets that pick up cartridges and so on. It will probably be extended to include auto parts recyclers, and we would like also to have, ultimately, hazardous waste drop-offs and that sort of thing. So it is a one-stop shop for people to go to. People do not have to know who their local council is and so forth. Many young people do not have that information because they are renting and hence do not pay rates and so forth.

We are building Planet Ark Park in the Blue Mountains. It is surrounded by national park. It is a demonstration centre for wind energy, solar energy, grey water recycling, and it is off the grid. It is New South Wales based, but we have had support from the department of education because the plan is that a lot of schools will have camps there. It will be a great demonstration centre for that kind of alternative technology.

Mr DRUM — It is off the grid totally?

Ms HA — Yes. Planet Ark Products: I mentioned before that that is part of our fundraising. It probably contributes only about 9 to 10 per cent of our total income, but it is things like laundry powders and recycled toilet tissue. It is quite limited at the moment, but there is potential for more.

Planet Ark and Associates: sometimes we do a little bit of consulting when people want information or they want our advice on how we do things without actually running a campaign that has the Planet Ark brand as such attached.

The *Do Something!* video and schools kit: we did this around 1999 and 2000. This is an education kit with lesson plans for junior, middle and senior primary. We developed it to be curriculum approved for all states and territories. It was seed funded by the Australian Association of Liquidpaperboard Carton Manufacturers — a great name, isn't it — and the New South Wales dairy industry's milk for schools program paid to put a copy of that into each primary school in New South Wales. We have it available by mail order for sale to other schools. That is something we would like to see in more schools around the country. Basically it is people take out the lesson plans. It covers a whole heap of issues like waste and recycling, energy and biodiversity. Teachers can just take out a sheet and photocopy it if they wish. That is one thing we have done with schools. The *Do Something!* video was like a cross between a lifestyle show and a comedy video. Glynn Nicholas was the main character in it with Michael Caton, Wendy Harmer, Bob Downe, Jean Kitson and a few people. It was basically following Glynn Nicholas around and making his life greener throughout a day. That was a free rental video through Video Ezy. We launched that on World Environment Day 2000, and the idea was that when people rented a video from Video Ezy they could pick this up as a free rental, have a look at it and try out some of the things in there, whether it be water saving or energy saving at home.

World Environment News service: as the name suggests, every day up to 30 stories that Reuters journalists write are published on our site. It basically means that the environment stories that these journalists write that often do not make it to mainstream press get a viewing. It is more a research tool than something that is promoting action. We are also starting some programs overseas, largely in the UK. Jon Dee, our managing director, was originally from the UK. We are already doing a program about reducing junk mail, and we have a recycling program happening there in October.

My background: basically I run the Melbourne office as such for Planet Ark. When people need to have meetings in Victoria or they want to know about Planet Ark in Victoria, I am usually the person who is there, like today. I am also the media spokesperson, so if people want a bit more of Victorian interest on a radio interview then I can talk about what it is like to live in Victoria. By trade I am a science journalist. I did a chemistry degree followed by scientific and technical writing at Deakin University. *Greeniology* was basically my self-funded pay rise. In Planet Ark, being a not-for-profit organisation, there is never enough money to go around. Something interesting at Planet Ark is that we all come from such diverse backgrounds. One of our directors actually came out of the advertising industry and worked on the whole *It's Time* campaign for Gough Whitlam. Most of us could be earning a truckload more money in other industries, but we have all taken pay cuts to work for a not-for-profit organisation because of the warm and fuzzy feeling it gives us, and we are passionate about it. *Greeniology* came about because I had done so much writing for Planet Ark and for our campaigns that I felt I had at least half a book if I put together all my files and because as an environment group you can do only so many things, but there were so many more issues or areas of advice that I felt could be addressed. So I guess the idea for *Greeniology* came from wanting a one-stop

source of information for the people who ring us up and say, 'What's better — cloth or disposable nappies?' and that kind of thing.

The CHAIR — An interesting discussion.

Ms HA — Yes. So I wanted to do something we could direct people to, because there were plenty of environmental books around, but a lot of them were North American or European and not really relevant to the way things are done in Australia. They talk about south-facing windows for solar access, when we want north-facing windows. That is why I wrote *Greeniology*. I said to the directors of Planet Ark, 'I'll write this, and the book royalties will be the way I fund my own maternity leave'. You do not make money out of writing books in Australia, by the way! But that was the plan, so they would not have to pay me maternity leave and I would have a tiny bit of income. *Greeniology* was launched in March last year — about a week before we joined the war in Iraq! It did not get a great radio run in interviews because everyone wanted to talk about Iraq. But still, it has been well received. It has been quite a successful book commercially for the publisher, Allen and Unwin, and as such it is being adapted for overseas audiences. There is going to be a Chinese translation. I am about 90 per cent of the way through the Canadian edition, and I am about to start on the UK edition. The interesting thing about that has been looking at the way things like energy use and water use is used in education and campaigned for in places like Canada and the UK. I think that is about it. The rest of the slides probably say more about the same things I have already covered inadvertently. I will go to the slide on *Greeniology*. Retail sales: it sold around about 3500 copies, which does not sound major, but 2000 copies for an environment book is very good in Australia. It is not Shane Warne's autobiography! There is potential for a second edition.

I will just say a little bit on the fluffy and shameless self-promotion of Tanya Ha: I have just filmed a pilot for a children's television program. One thing I might mention is that Planet Ark's long-term view in employing me has always been to groom me as not just an environmental spokesperson but a female environmentalist. Jon and Pat, in doing a lot of the media interviews, found that as environmental spokespeople they could talk all they wanted about using bicarb soda for green cleaning and that kind of thing, but no-one believed them because everyone was there saying, 'Yeah, sure! You've got a missus doing all the cleaning at home'. In our current perception, with things like what nappies to use, how can a man talk about changing nappies? 'How many of them do?' is the question that people ask.

Many of the people in our target audience are female. If we asked people to name some environmentalists, they would probably name David Suzuki, David Bellamy, David Attenborough, Peter Garrett and Ian Kieran — it is all men. So one thing we deliberately wanted to do was create a female voice for what we were doing so that we could identify with housewives talk, for want of a better phrase, because they are the ones actually making the purchasing decisions or the lifestyle choices at home. With that in mind, partly because of the media coverage that surrounded the book, I am a semi-regular guest on *The Glass House* and a few other shows. I was asked to film a pilot, which apparently is now down to the final three, so who knows, I might be on the TV talking about the environment one day. You never know. If that happens, then we will do a second run of *Greeniology* and have 'As seen on TV' or something like that on it.

The Anglesea Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plan is the pilot program for the NEIP program. I was contacted by Geoff Brown, who has been running that program. He was interested in getting me down to do some workshops as part of the NEIP program. That went really well, and afterwards he got a Cool Communities grant and with that grant bought bulk copies of *Greeniology*. As part of a welcome kit, when people who are participating in that program sign up for green power, he sends them a copy of *Greeniology*. His feedback to me has been that they have loved it and they have really found it useful. That kind of program identifies people who are that way inclined and gives them a bit more information and makes it easy to find and easy to use. From Geoff's point of view, he either had to write the fact sheets himself covering the questions he was frequently being asked or hand over a book, which was just easier for him, and say, 'Look it up in here. Use the index. Find it that way'.

A few hundred copies are probably going up to New South Wales. There is a lady up there who runs green cleaning workshops, and she wants to give these to her workshop participants. The AMP Foundation, which is one of our sponsors for National Tree Day, ran a competition with schools that are joining in, and it wanted to reward the teachers with a copy of the book, I guess partly to help the teachers become the local environmental experts. The *Sydney Morning Herald* has also ordered bulk copies as part of what it is doing environmentally and as a subscription offer as well. Allen and Unwin, my publisher, has also done other things with similar books,

partnering it with existing programs. One example is a book called *Dogs and Kids*, and the publisher is potentially working with the EPA and with a dog licensing program. When people apply for a dog licence they have the opportunity to get a copy of this *Dogs and Kids* book, so that something is going home that is helping with safety, providing information about better indoor air quality and addressing the health issues with pet ownership. That is a deal that is being done directly between EPA and Allen and Unwin, so there is potential for that sort of partner program. I have probably gone way over time.

The CHAIR — That is all right. George Seitz has a few questions.

Mr SEITZ — I am pleased to hear you are trying to get the manufacturer to take responsibility for buying back recycled goods, especially with built-in obsolescence in white goods, cars, computers and everything else, and also with batteries, because everything is done electronically now. How are we going with batteries? I know in Europe and North America there is quite strict control on how they are disposed of, but here in Australia I have not heard anyone in the environment movement actually talking about the battery situation.

Ms HA — We have been investigating batteries quite a lot, because we got asked a lot of questions when we were running the mobile phone recycling program, which was taking mobile phone batteries as well. It is a policy of Planet Ark's that we do not ask for a behaviour that we do not want to continue for a long time. It is the tap on, tap off thing. We do not ask for a behaviour that we might have to change in the future, and therefore we do not encourage people to do a behaviour if we are not satisfied that the solution really is a solution. An example is the cartridge recycling program that we did. We had been approached to partner cartridge recycling programs three times before we started the one we are doing, because there is a lot of money to be made out of remanufactured cartridges, and people are often saying, 'Give us your cartridges and we will donate something to something or other'. With every program that had been offered to us they said, 'Okay, can you promote this?', but none of them had a solution for the 90 per cent of models that are not suited to remanufacturing. The people who finally approached us had developed technology that separated out those models suited to remanufacturing and then granulated the rest. They have an incredible facility from a science point of view that separates and purifies all the other components, so no waste goes to landfill. We would not have started cartridge recycling — we waited several years — until there was a good solution.

With batteries, currently the world best practice with nickel metal hydride batteries — the majority of disposable batteries — is incineration. It is incineration or prescribed landfill, and we are just not happy to go ahead and say, 'Give all your batteries to us' and put our name on it unless some of those metals can be reclaimed or unless there is just a better solution. There is definitely progress being done on it, and we are keeping our ear to the ground on that one, but right now the technology does not seem to be keeping pace.

Mr SEITZ — Are you doing anything with the mercury in our fluorescent tubes?

Ms HA — Not as yet. With Planet Ark there are only so many things we can address at the one time, but that is something I have been meaning to bring to the attention of the directors, because there are programs with bulb recycling happening in Canada. One of the benefits of doing the Canadian edition of *Greeniology* is that I am finding all sorts of things that they are doing in North America that we have not tried here yet, and recycling light globes is one of them. That is definitely something I would like to look into more.

Mrs COOTE — How do you measure the accountability? You said that, for example, there are books and a number of programs, and that a lot of the programs are for awareness, so what sort of accountability do you have there?

Ms HA — Okay. Some of it is not that good for measuring — things like the recycling programs, where it is retail take-back, it is cartridges in the bin and cards in the bin compared with sales figures. Australia Post tells us how many Christmas cards they send each year, which gives us an idea how many are out there. With cartridges it is number in the bin, and with mobile phones it was number in the bin. With National Recycling Week, because it is an awareness campaign more than anything else, media coverage really is the way we measure the success of that. We have gone by recycling rates with programs we have done before that target specific areas. We did a four-year program targeting steel can recycling, because steel can recycling rates at the time were around about 24 per cent and aluminium cans were up at about 60 per cent at that time, so we targeted that area. Because we largely do umbrella campaigns it is hard to estimate numbers, especially with recycled feed stocks, because it is

really hard to know how much is actually going through, but with that we went on the recycling rate, which the steel industry fed back to us. Over four years that went from 28 to 41 per cent.

With National Tree Day it was the number of volunteers participating, the number of tree planting sites, and the number of seedlings in the ground, which we get through a results form. We also take a sample of about 10 per cent minimum — it is usually more — and follow up again just to check that the results that are sent are correct and that sort of thing. Then we follow up a smaller sample — I think it is 10 per cent — a few months after the event and get some feedback on seedling survival.

Mr HILTON — Tanya, I was most impressed by your passion in this area, which is obviously good to see. The community is being bombarded with, 'We have to be more environmentally friendly and sustainable. We have to be more efficient in the way we use energy, water, waste management and so on'. I am just wondering how you see the role of your organisation in that sort of message presentation; what the reaction is of the general public — the 98 per cent of people who do not participate in a Planet Ark tree-planting day — to these various messages; and whether you feel your organisation is helping because it is raising awareness or is in some ways not helping because it is confusing people.

Ms HA — I see what you mean, and I think it is a very good point, because I think some people are confused. My background being in science journalism and science communication being my thing, the first thing I realised was that in any work I did I would come up against what I call the science cringe, when people say, 'I don't want to understand this information. It's too scary and I don't understand it'. When I joined Planet Ark I found a similar thing, that there was a green cringe, for want of a better phrase. Planet Ark's aim is to market green and to make it more appealing, because there are a lot of people out there who think greenies, people who care about the environment or people who have rainwater tanks must have dreadlocks as well and must wear hemp jeans. The thing we are trying to put forward is that it is accessible and it is people like you and me. I think you are right, there probably is a confusing message out. There they are also seeing eco homes and things in *House and Garden* magazine or in the popular media, and it is these architectural houses that foster the belief that you have to have architects and you have to be at the upper end of house purchasing to have a home that is environmental friendly, whereas that is not the case at all. Am I answering your question?

Mr HILTON — I suspect not, actually, but then I am not sure you can answer the question. Maybe I could just ask a supplementary. In terms of the information which is available about green issues you cannot open a newspaper or see the TV without having some information. How effective do you believe that is from a behavioural change perspective, and does it need to be backed up by something which is a bit more compelling — that is, increasing the price that we pay for energy or making a charge on the amount of waste we dispose of?

Ms HA — To tell you the truth I think that will work so quickly. The moment there was a threat of a plastic bag levy people started changing. The unfortunate truth for a lot of it is that consuming behaviour changes when you increase the metering price, the amount we pay per cubic metre of water. In is interesting because in Canada they are trying to encourage people to use less water and theoretically they have 20 per cent of the world's fresh water supply. They just do not have the infrastructure to keep up with supply. The other example is landfill levies. Whether that is because it affects how much councils are having to fork out and the cost of processing waste, I do not know. If you plot a graph of countries and their recycling rates and another graph of countries and their landfill levies — that is, what they charge people to put stuff in the ground — you will see some pretty stark similarities. I think councils would be very angry at me for saying that because they do not want their land film levies increased. I think you are right. There is the financial side. The moment it makes financial sense to be more environmentally friendly, things change. One thing that I would passionately love to see with water as the example is the idea of natural capitalism where people pay not for the volume they consume, but for the service that is being provided. So then it is in the best interest of the people retail water to tell you how to use less water. They are not going to be penalised by having to charge you less.

Getting back to simplifying it, that is one of the other things I would like to see. You are right about all these messages. Something like *Greeniology* is fun. There is a truckload of information in there, and the people who care about the environment or who want an alternative for something day to day, they can pull it out, open it and look it up; they use it and it is great. They feel good about it, but if there were 1000, to pull a number out of the sky, tips in that book in terms of making the biggest difference to the environment, like reducing water use and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, there are probably about a dozen things in there that would get 80 per cent of the change, and the other 988 or whatever it is would be getting that remaining 20 per cent.

One thing has been itching in the back of my mind and I want to do more with it. I am going to ask the directors if they want to talk about it. It is an idea called effective environmental choices. The thing in the top of my mind at the moment is having a nine-month old baby. Being an environmentalist and being known as an environmentalist, the first thing everyone asks me is, 'Are you using cloth nappies?'. And I instantly say, 'Yes, because it is expected of me'. The amount of grief people put new mothers through! They are already suffering guilt because of going back to work or not going to work and that whole thing — there is no way to do motherhood without feeling guilty! — and we are giving them more guilt over nappies when in Australia there is actually not a lot of difference between the two. So whenever someone says, 'Cloth or disposable nappies, what should I do?' I say, 'Green power'. And they ask me what I mean by that. I say, 'You can use either cloth or disposables better. If you are using cloth, then look at what kind of machine you are using and look at the kind of detergent you are using'. I am partly using cloth because I have a AAAA-rated machine, but when I had my first child I had a very high water-using machine, so I think cloth would have been worse. I have to say to them, 'Why are you talking about nappies? Buy green power. That is going to make a big difference instantly, and you do not even have to change your behaviour to make a difference straight away with that'.

Mr DRUM — With the Planet Ark park in the Blue Mountains, do you know how much energy they are actually producing? Do you know the outputs or how much?

Ms HA — I am not too sure. I can find out if you like, but it is being changed at the moment because it is being further developed with accommodation sectors, and it is also going to have some wind turbines put in and our expectation is that we will ultimately grid connect and feed back to the grid. So there is definitely a long-term view to do a lot more with wind energy.

Mr DRUM — Currently how are they generating the power that they use for the school camp at the moment if they have not got turbines?

Ms HA — The school camp is not finished yet; it is more the turbines, but a smaller scale, and solar.

Mr DRUM — How successful was the Do Something campaign? Would you rate it as a success? I think it is a great idea to be able to pick up a free environmental video along with the latest new release. Did you have any success with that?

Ms HA — It was one of those things that was definitely moving through. Again, I think it was a good point to ask how we measure the good things. The sheer nature of it was very hard to measure because it was a national program, and it is hard to know. We can say, 'Okay, that person switched off that light switch when they left the room. Is it because of this or something else?' A lot of what we do is diffuse campaigning which can be hard a measure. Video Ezy said that it was being picked up and quite popular. We had a lot of teachers ring us up. We also get feedback through our web site and email. We get people sending things through; that is another way that we get it. We get a little bit of a feeler that is by no means exhaustive, but it gives us a feel for how things are being received. We found teachers in particular were picking up this. I guess it was for ideas on how to educate kids in their classes and to get them to do something a little bit different. The response seemed to be quite good to that.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for your time, Tanya. That has been terrific.

Committee adjourned.