



# ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

### **GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING - SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE & CITY PLANNING**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The decisions and activities of Gosford City Council have a significant impact on the local and regional ecological systems that current and future generations depend upon for their survival and enjoyment. Council is responsible for delivering a variety of services concerned with protecting, conserving and rehabilitating the natural and built environment. Through its policies, Council will achieve ecological sustainability in accordance with and beyond the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993.

Council is committed to leading the community by example through its actions.

Council recognises that it is in a position to influence the community to adopt responsible environmental practices and should therefore extensively communicate with the community to inform, educate and lead them in regard to the action they should take to achieve ecological sustainability.

Council acknowledges that in order to meet statutory obligations and community expectations it must apply the principles of ecological sustainability across all of its decisions and activities.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

'ecological resilience' means:

where ecological degradation has occurred, natural recovery should be included within rehabilitation plans

'ecological sustainability' means the following statements of principle (as per the definition of ecologically sustainable development in the Local Government Act 1993):

Ecological sustainability requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes. Ecological sustainability can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:

- (a) the precautionary principle - namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:
  - (i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment, and
  - (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options,

- (b) inter-generational equity - namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations,
- (c) conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity - namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration,
- (d) improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms - namely, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, such as:
  - (i) polluter pays - that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement,
  - (ii) the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste,
  - (iii) environmental goals, having been established, should be pursued in the most cost effective way, by establishing incentive structures including market mechanisms, that enable those best placed to maximise benefits or minimise costs to develop their own solutions and responses to environmental problems.

‘environment’ means (as adapted from the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979):

the natural and built aspects of the surroundings of people, whether affecting them as individuals or in social groupings

‘social capital’ means:

the established networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit

## PHILOSOPHY OF ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

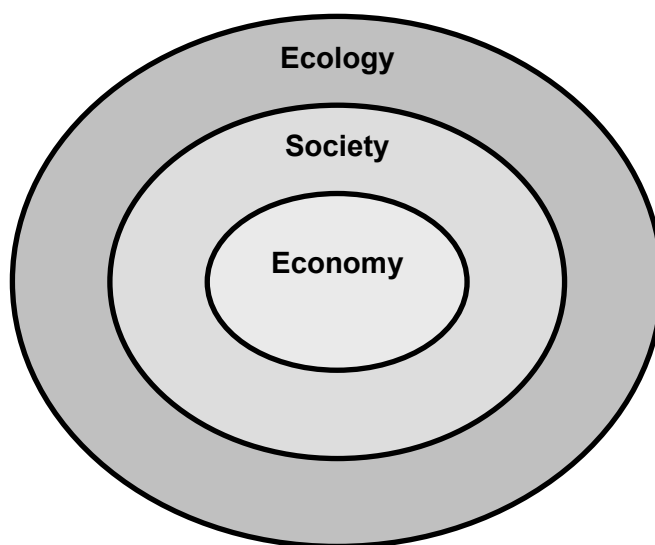


Figure 1: Relationship between the Ecology, Society and Economy - the economy serves human society and both operate within the capacities of the natural ecological systems.

Ecological sustainability recognises the worth of ecological and social assets and ensures that development occurs so as to preserve and, where damage has been done, improve the ecological and social capital for current and future generations, whilst deriving economic benefits from these assets.

Within the parameters of ecological sustainability, the relationship between the economy, our society and the ecology of the natural systems upon which we depend for long term survival is illustrated in Figure 1.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Council's charter includes the responsibility to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of Gosford City, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecological sustainable development (adapted from section 8, Local Government Act 1993), which ensures that it is a city where:

- air is clean and healthy;
- water is clean and healthy;
- the aquatic ecosystems of the creeks, rivers, lagoons, estuaries and oceans are protected and maintained, aquatic habitats are preserved and enhanced, whilst recognising and optimising the values of natural systems;
- native vegetation is retained, rehabilitated and managed to enable all life to live and multiply and to provide for a diversity of species living in natural communities and habitats;
- sensitive areas, including natural wetlands and rainforests, are protected from inappropriate developments and activities that would adversely affect them within their catchments;
- natural processes are recognised and accommodated;
- natural ecosystems are valued and protected;
- the aesthetic values of the city's natural and built environment are protected and enhanced;
- waste is minimised, disposed of safely and is to be viewed and utilised as a valuable resource, so that ultimately nothing is wasted;
- cultural heritage is protected and conserved;
- the community can use and enjoy the resources of the city;
- individuals are aware of their actions and the inhabitants and users of the city consider, conduct and respect themselves as part of the ecosystem, understanding the connections between what they do and the state of their environment and being aware of the relationship between a healthy environment and healthy people, thus meeting the needs of today's generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs;
- council, industry, individuals and groups don't pollute; and
- the community works together to achieve a healthy, productive and ecologically sustainable society.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

To effectively integrate the principles of ecological sustainability into all council and community functions so as to achieve a clean, healthy and ecologically sustainable environment for the City of Gosford.

Council is committed to:

1. Integrating the principles of ecological sustainability (including the precautionary principle; inter-generational equity; conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity; and improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms) into all Council's policies, programs and services.
2. Achieving continuous improvements in environmental performance, over and above regulatory and legislative requirements
3. Monitoring and reporting the environmental quality of the city and the environmental performance of the Council to the councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and the community
4. Working in partnership with government, organisations and the community to promote the ecological, social and economic health of the city, to achieve sustainable environmental outcomes
5. Promoting ecological resilience and the conservation, rehabilitation and ecologically sustainable use of resources within Council and the community, as well as minimising environmental pollution and waste
6. Applying cumulative impact assessment throughout Council and promoting the application of cumulative impact assessment by the community
7. Raising the awareness of environmental issues within Gosford, facilitating the empowerment of individuals and groups to take an active role in managing their environment

## **POLICY STRATEGIES**

In order to achieve the objectives of its environmental statement of intent Council will:

- 1.1 Incorporate the principles of ecological sustainability into all council functions.
- 1.2 Develop new policies that will assist in achieving the objectives and strategies described within the Gosford 2025 Community Strategic Plan.
- 1.3 Prepare, adopt and progressively implement appropriate responses to issues identified in Council's - State of the City Report.
- 1.4 Advise all Council staff of the requirement to implement the principles of ecological sustainability in all decisions and activities, and put in place procedures to ensure those principles are accorded with.
- 2.1 Implement and continually improve Council's Integrated Management System, which integrates Occupational Health and Safety with environmental management for all Council activities.

- 2.2 Use continuous improvement methods to upgrade policy and practice.
- 3.1 Monitor environmental performance against set targets using appropriate and rigorous indicators and feedback mechanisms.
- 3.2 Inspect and audit both Council and community activities and take appropriate action where activities contravene regulations.
- 3.3 Regularly report environmental performance to Council and the community and identify gaps between desired and actual performance.
- 4.1 Actively consult with government, organisations, the broad community and the affected community in the process of developing policies and management plans.
- 4.2 Support the policies and programs of other organisations, which upon review are assessed as appropriate for Gosford so as to avoid duplication of effort and maximise the benefits to the city.
- 5.1 Develop and adopt working practices, in accordance with Council's Integrated Management System, that minimise the adverse impacts that Council has on the environment.
- 5.2 Promote Council's environmental management initiatives and activities to encourage better practice within the community.
- 5.3 Ensure the thorough control of development and building activities in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the Local Government Act 1993 and the principles of ecological sustainability.
- 6.1 Ensure that the cumulative impacts of proposals, both within local and regional contexts, are assessed when planning Council activities, determining all applications and undertaking functions of Council.
- 6.2 Ensure that the principles of Total Catchment Management are incorporated when planning Council activities, determining all applications and undertaking functions of Council.
- 7.1 Undertake extensive environmental awareness training for all staff and measure the effectiveness of such training.
- 7.2 Provide ongoing environmental education for the community on environmental matters and measure its effectiveness.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Council, in all its facets, will be fully accountable for the implementation and transparent operation of all its programs.

- 2. The Council will be responsible for allocating financial resources to enable implementation of the policy.
- 3. The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leadership Team will be responsible for the implementation of the policy throughout Council.

4. Action plans will be prepared, adopted and implemented for each of the strategies identified in the policy, within the limitations set by Council.
5. Time frames for implementation will be applied to all action plans.
6. A transparent audit process will be prepared, adopted and implemented for each of the strategies identified in the policy.
7. Managers, Supervisors and employees will be responsible for implementing specific actions as outlined in the adopted action plans.
8. All Councillors and Council staff will be responsible for compliance with the policy in all decisions and activities.

(Minute No 44/1999 - 2 March 1999)

(Minute No 239/2000 – 24 October 2000 – Review of Policies – no changes)

(Minute No 214/2005 - 8 March 2005 - Review of Policies)

(Minute No 610/2009 - 1 September 2009 - Review of Policies)

(Min No 2013/388 - 16 July 2013 - Review of Policies)