



**Title:** Sustainability

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Sustainability Policy Impact Statement

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define sustainability for the Canterbury City and reinforce our commitment to supporting and encouraging environmental protection and social and economic development.

### 1.1 Background

Early in 2009 we undertook the Sustainability Health Check (SHC), a management tool that has been developed by Sustainable Futures Australia for the Local Government Managers Association and the Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW). The Sustainability Health Check can improve a council's performance by integrating the different elements and principles of sustainability throughout the organisation.

The Sustainability Health Check has shown that we are using a variety of processes and tools well to achieve sustainable outcomes for Canterbury City, particularly safety and health, and responsible use of resources. It identified, however, a need to focus on creating a culture of sustainability, particularly in corporate systems, and promoting change through facilitation and education. A number of actions for improvement were identified through the SHC, and an Action Plan was prepared.

### 1.2 Rationale

A high priority action arising from the SHC was to establish an organisational position on sustainability including the adoption of a policy, definition of sustainability for Canterbury City, and preparation of guidance and direction in applying ESD principles.

The Policy supports our vision for Canterbury as "a great place to live and work", and the long term goals in the five Strategic Themes of our City Plan: attractive city, stronger community, healthy environment, strategic leadership and an improving organisation. The policy also provides an organisational framework for the activities carried out under our Environmental Management Plan, Social Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

Immediate (By end of 2012)

i. **Increase understanding** of the broader concept of sustainability within Council and the community

Intermediate (2013-2015)

ii. **Provide** an organizational framework under which Council and community sustainability outcomes are maximized.

iii. **Embed** sustainability considerations in all Council decision-making

iv. **Integrate** a consistent approach in applying sustainability across the organization

v. **Acknowledge** Council's and the community's achievements in sustainability

Ultimate (2016-2020)

vi. **Create** a culture of sustainability within Council and the community

### 3.Scope

This Sustainability Policy applies to the decisions and activities of the whole of Council, including elected representatives, staff and contractors. It can also be used to inform and educate local residents and ratepayers on promoting sustainability principles in the community.

### 4.Definitions

#### Sustainability

We define **sustainability** as:

“Our ability to meet the ecological, social, economic and human habitat needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

#### Sustainability Principles

The following principles are recognised internationally as the basis for guiding planning, decision-making and implementing actions for sustainability.

- **The Precautionary Principle** - was defined at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro as:  
*“Where 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.”*
- **Intergenerational Equity** - requires us to consider the needs and resources available for both the current and future generations. We should not pass on debts which will be difficult to service, including financial, environmental, educational, health or housing debts to future generations.
- **Conservation of Biological Diversity and Ecological Integrity** – requires us to maintain or improve biological diversity, ecological health and ecological integrity to ensure these systems can support life, and continue to provide resources and services used by industry, business and the general public. Maintaining biological diversity and health is important because the natural environment has ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural and aesthetic values.
- **Improved Economic Valuation including Environmental Factors** – includes for decision-making purposes, environmental costs in the valuation of assets and services. For example, the cost of timber should include the costs associated with the loss of ecological functions of forests, the cost of disposal of by-products and the end product, costs of pollution created as a result of felling, transporting and manufacture and the cost of changes (ecological, human, cultural, etc) in adjacent/nearby land.
- **Triple Bottom Line (TBL)** - (also know as people, planet, profit) considers society, ecology and economy in decision-making and measuring an organisation’s success. Traditionally, businesses only used to report on their financial position. TBL requires businesses to report on their financial position, ecology impact and quality of life for its employees and the local society.

- **Quadruple Bottom Line** – adds governance to the triple bottom line. Governance includes accountability, transparency, effective financial, asset and human resource management and engaging with the local community and other stakeholders. Quadruple Bottom Line is also known as Triple Bottom Line + 1.

## 5.Principles

### 5.1 Commitment

The City of Canterbury is committed to balancing the ecological, social, economic and human habitat needs of its jurisdictional area so that activities presently undertaken do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

### 5.2 Implementation across the whole of Council and the Community

We will incorporate sustainability into our decision-making and will take a multi-generational perspective when considering the implications of our decisions.

We will apply sustainability principles in all of our operations.

We will communicate the concept of sustainability across all of our departments to provide a whole of council approach and ensure consistency.

We will implement the key principles of sustainability through strategic community and corporate planning, joint partnerships, council programs and community-based activities.

We will provide appropriate training, resources, guidance and two-way communication for elected representatives and staff to understand and implement the Sustainability Policy.

We will develop a detailed Policy Implementation Plan to ensure the above commitments are delivered.

### 5.3 Sustainable Outcomes

We will run our operations and facilities, and provide services in a sustainable manner, and will work to achieve outcomes for Canterbury City, across all four dimensions of sustainability as they are defined herein.

#### 5.3.1 Environment

We will reduce the environmental impacts of our activities and improve or maintain our natural environment and resources without compromising Council's social or economical wellbeing. We will reduce energy, water, resource use and greenhouse gas emissions, minimise waste sent to landfill and reducing land, air, noise and water pollution from our activities. We will also assist businesses and the community to do the same.

Sustainable 'environmental' outcomes include:

- conserving resources by avoiding their unnecessary use, reusing or recycling where possible, and selecting environmentally 'lowest impact' options whenever social and economical considerations allow this
- responding appropriately to the impacts of climate change (e.g. increased flood levels, higher temperatures, reduced rainfall, more extreme weather events)
- Council and community energy use is reduced
- Council and community use of Green Power is increased
- Council and community water use is reduced including the reliance on potable water, using water fit for purpose
- products and services are developed considering their end uses e.g. reuse or recycling
- biodiversity is maintained and enhanced
- access to sustainable transport options is increased
- access to and preservation of open spaces is increased
- land, air, noise or water pollution is reduced
- the water quality of the Cooks River and Salt Pan Creek is improved or protected
- the Cooks River or Salt Plan Creek foreshore is protected
- the principles of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) and water cycle management are implemented

### 5.3.2 Society

We will assist to inspire a sense of pride and place as well as enhancing quality of life and defining local identity, without compromising Council's environmental or economic wellbeing. We will aim to preserve and strengthen the fabric of the community, building on community strengths. Sustainable 'social' outcomes can include:

- opportunities for people to participate in cultural development;
- opportunities for people to contribute to the enhancement of the natural and built environment
- opportunities for the expression of community values
- the celebration of natural heritage, national days of significance and local indigenous culture
- opportunities to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare
- a variety of sustainable and affordable housing types
- opportunities for people to participate in education
- access to quality community facilities and services
- maintain people's feelings of safety
- opportunities for people to get support when they are under stress
- opportunities for people to participate in community decision-making
- opportunities for people to participate in a healthy lifestyle
- promotion and support of good neighbourliness, volunteerism and community leadership

### 5.3.3 Economy

We will support the community's economical sustainability while not compromising its environmental and social wellbeing. Sustainable 'economical' outcomes can include:

- a diverse business sector that creates varied employment opportunities
- opportunities for people to become skilled and be flexible in the workforce

- a healthy financial position for council
- businesses have access to appropriate professional support systems such as freight, communications and accommodation;
- ongoing operations and maintenance costs are able to be met

#### **5.3.4 Human Habitat**

We will ensure that, through good community planning, quality infrastructure and services are provided without detrimental environmental, economical or social impacts. Sustainable 'human habitat' outcomes can include:

- people have quality built public places and spaces
- people have efficient transport and access alternatives
- people have places to live and work that meet their needs and that support other social, environmental or economic outcomes
- Council, State and industry development standards (e.g. BASIX, green buildings ratings, passive solar design, water sensitive urban design, etc.) are met or exceeded

### **5.4 Community Engagement**

We will consult with the community - including children, young people, and the elderly - in all matters that concern them, and encourage community participation in decision-making, sustainable activities and programs. This includes systematic processes to monitor and review the effective implementation of this policy.

### **5.5 Compliance**

We will at least comply with all applicable legislation, regulations and other requirements, but will consider the implementation of additional measures where required by the application of the sustainability principles.

### **5.6 Indicators and Targets**

We will establish indicators to measure progress in achieving sustainable outcomes, and targets for these indicators. Indicators and targets will be established for each dimension of sustainability, and outlined in the City Strategic Plan and Council Delivery Plan.

We will develop a detailed Policy Evaluation Plan to ensure that targets are SMARTA (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound and aligned with our organizational goals).

### **5.7 Monitoring and Review**

We will monitor and review our sustainability performance through existing advisory structures such as the Environmental and Sustainability Committee and the Economic Development Committee, and new structures such as the Social Sustainability Reference Group. We will report on our sustainability performance through the Annual Report. A Sustainability Health Check will be undertaken at least every four years.

## 6.Responsibilities

All council officials (elected representatives and staff) are responsible for applying the sustainability principles in decision-making and day to day activities.

In addition managers and team leaders from all departments are responsible to ensure the achievement of sustainable outcomes, and to apply sustainability principles, in the planning of activities and the allocation of resources.

The Executive (General Manager and Directors) is responsible for leadership in demonstrating commitment to achieving sustainable outcomes and applying sustainability principles in decision-making and in the allocation of resources.

The Team Leader - Environmental Strategy is responsible for implementation of the Sustainability Policy and for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy. The Environmental Strategy team is responsible for planning and coordinating the delivery of internal education programs to support staff in developing an understanding of this policy and developing specific strategies to promote sustainability in local workplaces.

The Manager – Corporate Strategy is responsible for ensuring that achieving sustainable outcomes and the application of sustainability principles is embedded in Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

## **Attachment - What Is Sustainability?**

### **Defining Sustainability**

Sustainability, in general terms, is the ability to maintain the balance of a process without exhausting or damaging the resources required to keep the process going.

In recent years, sustainability has been used to describe the need to balance society's development (economic, infrastructure and lifestyle) with the ecological systems and processes that support human life. It recognises that we should not produce and/or consume beyond our world's finite capacity or sustainable yield.

There is no single definition for sustainability that is accepted by everyone as the words 'sustainable' and 'sustainability' mean different things to different people. However, most definitions of sustainability draw from the 1992 United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development process which states that:

*'Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.*

Many individuals, organisations and governments have developed their own definition and interpretation of sustainability. Some are aligned with organisational or personal beliefs, some expand upon the definition to include other elements (e.g. culture) and others define sustainability as a goal, journey or vision for the future. Despite this, common themes of nature, economy, society and future generations tend to run through the definitions.

### **Relationship between Economics, Society and Environment in Sustainability**

Figure 1 on page 2 shows the connectivity between economics, society and environmental protection. It shows that decisions should not be based on one element only as the economy, society and environment are linked.

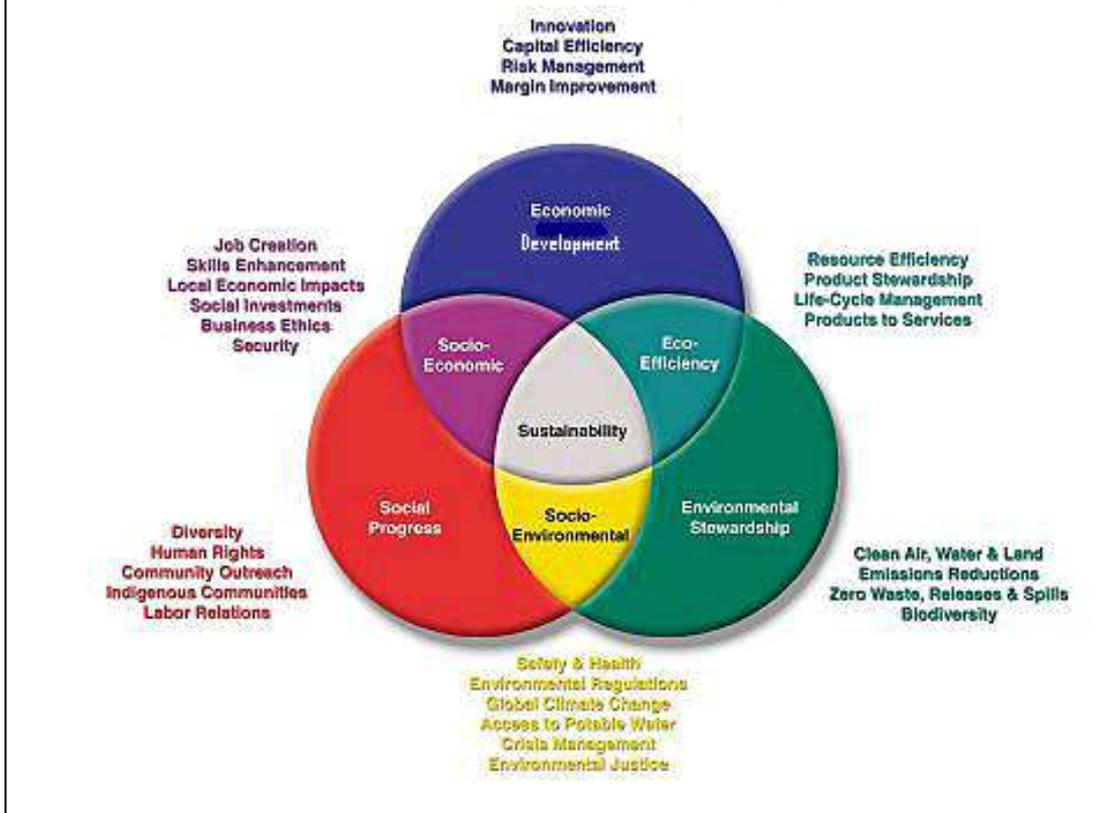
Considering only one element may have negative consequences for the other elements. For example, only considering the economics of a proposed development may produce the most financially sound result in the short term but it may cause environmental degradation which will require long term funding in the long term to repair damage and assist with the costs of displaced low income families who may need to find suitable new accommodation.

Likewise, considering two elements, for example, society and environmental protection, may provide for a safe and environmentally healthy suburb but may take funding away from other necessary services such as improving local business viability or upgrading Council equipment which will reduce water consumption.

All elements of sustainability need to be considered in the decision-making process. It is also important to remember that decisions made today can affect resources and services available for many years to come and even generations. For example, the cost of a new community facility is greater than just the expenditure incurred initially in its construction: whole-of-life costing needs to be taken into account under the principle of intergenerational equity, as it is future years' maintenance and debt servicing costs which have the effect of limiting resources in those same future years' budgets.

Decisions should not use a lack of certainty concerning scientific evidence or understanding to push ahead with a potentially damaging action. Sustainability should not be seen as a compromise between conflicting interests. Rather it can be viewed as the integrated consideration of needs required for long term growth and protection.

**Figure 1 - Interrelation of Economic Growth, Social Progress and Environmental Protection** Adapted from: GreenCityBlueLake, www.gcbl.org



### How do we apply sustainability to business operations?

The balance between economics, society and the environment can be considered in all decisions, big or small. In practice though, decisions very rarely achieve a truly sustainable outcome that exactly meets the needs of all stakeholders due to conflicting needs, wants, beliefs and priorities. For individuals, the decision will be strongly influenced by personal beliefs and ideals and often are automatic decisions. For businesses, the decision is influenced by regulations, company policies, image, business priorities, industry standards and stakeholder pressure.

To help people and organisations grapple with sustainability, a number of principles have been developed (see Definitions Section for more details):

- The Precautionary Principle
- Intergenerational Equity
- Conservation of Biologically Diversity and Ecological Integrity
- Improved Economic Valuation including Environmental Factors
- Triple Bottom Line and
- Quadruple Bottom Line.

### **An example of sustainability – Building a new head office**

- Economics - Design of the new building is based on financial costs and gains
- Society considerations - the design addresses the needs of workers and customers e.g. childcare services, onsite cafe, car and bicycle parking, public transport, culture and heritage, showers, indoor air quality, etc
- Environmental considerations - the building design addresses environmental considerations of both construction and building use, e.g. it includes passive solar design, installation of energy and water efficient devices, onsite reuse of materials, minimizes losses to biodiversity during construction, etc.
- Socio-environmental considerations - the design meets regulations regarding building performance and safety,
- Socio-economic - the design incorporates the image the business wants to portray e.g. industry leader, prestige, environmental friendly, etc
- Future generations - the design addresses current and future uses of the building,

### **International and Legal Context for Sustainability**

The need to integrate sustainability into our decision-making process is required at a number of levels. Federal and State governments have issued policies, strategies and initiatives which require local government and business to include sustainability in their operations.

Several pieces of state legislation require Council to consider sustainability in its operations. Under the Local Government Act for example, section 7(e) requires *“Councils, Councillors and Council employees to have regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development in carrying out their responsibilities”* and section 8(1) states that Council must *“properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development”*.

Note: for the purposes of this policy, the term ‘ecologically sustainable development’ can be used interchangeably with Council’s definition of ‘sustainability’.

At the international level, the Australian Government has signed a number of agreements and conventions which commit us to ecological sustainable development and environmental improvements.

## Sustainability Check List

To help integrate sustainability into decision-making, a list of questions you may need to consider is included below. This list is meant to provide a guide and get you thinking about the different elements of sustainability. It isn't exhaustive and not all questions may be relevant to your decision.

### General

- Have you consulted with relevant staff (e.g. Environmental Issues, Town Planning and Economic Development, Community Services, Finance)
- Have you consulted with the community?
- How will it be integrated into Council's Plans and Processes e.g. City Strategic Plan, Work Plans, Risk Assessment and Policies?
- Will Councillors, staff or the community need to be educated about the decision?
- Does it comply with all applicable legislation, regulations and other requirements?
- Have you considered the main Sustainability Principles as listed in the Definitions Section of this Policy?
- Have funds been provided in the budget to cover costs?

### Ecological Considerations

- Do we need it or can we use an existing item?
- Does it consider the impacts of climate change (e.g. increased flood levels, higher temperatures, reduced rainfall, more extreme weather events)?
- Does it reduce energy use or use less energy compared to other options?
- If it uses energy, does it use accredited Green Power?
- Does it reduce water use or use less water compared to other options?
- Does it use recycled materials?
- Can the end product be reused or recycled?
- Is biodiversity affected?
- Does it improve access to and preservation of open spaces?
- Does it cause or reduce land, air, noise or water pollution?
- Does it protect or improve the water quality of the Cooks River or Salt Pan Creek?
- Does it protect the Cooks River or Salt Plan Creek foreshore?
- Will it affect land use policies?
- Does it meet the requirements of the Purchasing Policy, Waste Reduction and Procurement Policy
- Does it include Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles?

### Social Considerations

- Does it provide opportunities for people to participate in cultural development?
- Does it provide and support opportunities for the expression of community values?
- Does it promote the celebration of natural heritage, national days of significance and local indigenous culture?
- Does it support and provide opportunities to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare?
- Does it encourage a variety of sustainable housing types?
- Does it encourage and support opportunities for people to participate in education?
- Does it provide access to quality community facilities and services?
- Does it enhance or maintain people's feeling's of safety?

- Does it create opportunities where people can get support when they are under stress?
- Does it provide opportunities for people to participate in community decision-making?
- Does it provide opportunities for people to participate in a healthy lifestyle?
- Does it enhance public convenience, health, safety, intellectual/social/cultural development, recreation, civic pride and/or responsibility or the development of social capital within the community?

#### **Economic Considerations**

- Does it supporting a diverse business sector which creates varied employment opportunities?
- Does it contribute to a prosperous and vibrant local economy?
- Does it provide and support opportunities for people to become skilled and be flexible in the workforce?
- Does it help the organisation maintain a healthy financial position?
- Does it assist businesses in having access to appropriate services which enable prompt and professional business support systems such as freight, communications and accommodation?
- How will ongoing and maintenance costs be met?

#### **Human Habitat Considerations**

- Does it provide good community planning and the development of quality infrastructure?
- Does it address or go above Council, State and Industry development requirements (e.g. BASIX, Green Building ratings, passive solar design, etc)?
- Does it support improved community access to more efficient and sustainable transport options?
- Does it contribute to enhancing local biodiversity and/or open space?