

Our first newsletter, from the feedback, seems to have been well received. We hope to continue providing useful and interesting information in subsequent newsletters.



What is sustainability?

Sustain (verb) + ability (adjective) = sustainability (noun).

A literal dictionary definition for the verb sustain is to *support*, especially for long periods or to *endure* (Oxford dictionary).

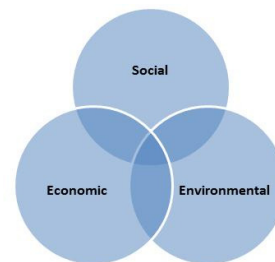
In the more broad context to which we are referring one of the more commonly used definitions of sustainability comes from the report *Our Common Future* (The Brundtland Report) which brought the concept of sustainable development onto the international agenda in 1987, describing it as:

Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Perhaps the dictionary definition is not so far astray! However, it is important to break the sustainable development definition down into more meaningful areas where tangible actions in our ways of living and working can be enacted. To this end a three pronged approach is used to look at the social, environmental and economic aspects of living and working in ways that do not jeopardise our current and future social, environmental and economic resources. These must all be coordinated and addressed to ensure the long term viability of our community and the planet.

The three prongs of sustainability are:

- Social equity - product responsibility, community impacts, labour practices, human rights
- Environmental stewardship - impacts on air, water, waste, biodiversity, energy use
- Economic prosperity - sales, profits, return on investment, jobs created, cash flow



Social equity includes the advanced human resource practices of investing in the development of employees, developing relationships in support of local communities and making charitable contributions, providing work environments worthy of employees, furthering human rights, supporting public health, and adhering to business ethics.

Environmental stewardship refers to doing no harm to our environment and repairing harm that has already been done. Economic benefits can be reaped by employing strategies that include changing in areas such as design, process, and technology to reduce materials consumed in production and delivery, to reduce and reuse waste, and to make work more efficient.

Economic prosperity is similar to today's economic business model, but it goes beyond just the economic health of the organisation. It is a holistic perspective of community and economic prosperity beyond the single organisation. It includes the prosperity of all directly interdependent with the organisation.



Sustainable Stories

In the previous newsletter we began talking about the journey that Sarah and Andrew have been travelling on their way to a more sustainable home and life. Sarah continues the conversation:

I talked about some of the extras that come along with a change of lifestyle that starts the journey toward more sustainable living and working. In busy work mode we tend to keep doing what we have always done and getting what we have always got. There are so many accepted “norms” out there that we don’t question - that become visible when we commit to a different lifestyle and jump off the merry go round long enough to reflect a little. So many “norms” are sold to us as givens and we perpetuate them ad infinitum. Some that come to mind are ideals such as “personal ownership”, garden design where the back garden is where we grow vegetables regardless of aspect (if at all) and the need for a well fed, green lawn all year round.

Sitting down writing today we can hear the roar of lawn mowers working overtime to combat the growth brought on by our moist and warm weather and a top dress of fertilizer. We have a “push mower” that self sharpens as Andrew pushes it round our flat 15 square metre lawn each week. You might ask “why have a lawn in the first place”? - it’s these types of question that get us thinking about “norms”. Our chooks graze it and it provides a cool respite when gardening. Our fetish for lawns has a multitude of impacts (finite superphosphate reserves and run off into waterways, petrol use etc.). We know others have considered push mowers as an option to replace their petrol mower and provide a bit of “gym” exercise simultaneously - my daughter’s friend Emma (my ungenerous thoughts often preclude this generation from

sustainable consumerism) bought a new push mower last week to tame her small back lawn so she can position her secondhand, rejuvenated outdoor setting on it (courtesy the Hobart Tip shop!).

Our western ideal of personal ownership seems to preclude the idea of “sharing” a petrol lawnmower except where “Jim’s Mowing” is utilized. And then there are the clippings. I have heard of one person who advertises “will collect and take away grass clippings and leaves - please call”. She is apparently inundated with wonderful mulch that feeds and increases water retention in her soil. My niece in Melbourne (which is alive with public transport) uses a “shared” hire car each week which she books on line through her membership and picks up at the corner. Kate has an 18 month old and also rides a bike to get about. But this option enables her some flexibility to visit with friends out of the city centre and to do some extra shopping at the markets.



Consumption Fact



- **1 litre of milk = between 500-1300L of water**
- **2.58MJ energy is required to produce 1 dietary MJ**

So many of the consumption impacts are invisible to us, but by making the invisible visible, might help us be a little more aware.



What’s happening out there?

Here are some other stories received from replies to our November newsletter:

Sarah's sister in NZ is planning installation of solar hot water and water tanks on her Wanganui home - Jane is wondering what the neighbours will make of it when town water is in ready supply. Sarah and Andrew had water tanks installed several months ago and opted to have a fully connected system that alternates between mains and tank feed. It feels like the world is out of kilter when someone suggests plumbing rainwater just into toilets?? Water use changes when water comes in tanks - suddenly it's a tangible amount that can be measured and compared, rather than a perceived endless resource that flows from a tap connected to an invisible supply. Since installing water tanks Andrew and Sarah have changed leaky taps and showerheads, started to use soaker irrigation, put gravel bags in toilet cisterns, recycled more water from the kitchen sink and started to pump the bath out onto the tomato bed.



Commenting on the cost comparison information for solar hot water in the November newsletter, Andrew Mollison sent in his comments:

"We are a couple who are frugal with our water use particularly hot water. So our hot water bill was a lot lower than the amount used in your article. If we had used the same amount of hot water as you suggest in your article we would have made the same savings if we got 80% solar heating. Our system at Tarooma was an Apricus evacuated tube system which was well installed; was well maintained and the control system got the most out of the sun. What we realised was that although we saved on our hot water bill significantly the saving was only small compared to the installation cost of \$3500. It was going to take us more than 10 years to pay for the system even with significant energy price rises. A serious problem is the

standard of installation. Many installers do not appear to fully understand the systems they are installing or the need to orient the collector correctly. Some systems have been installed in situations where the collectors are in shade for significant periods in the middle of the day! Some really good quality training needs to happen. The control systems also appear to be a problem. Many control systems do not make the best use of the solar heating available due to either poor design or poor setup or inappropriate product selection. We need to do some quality control on this product before we push it too hard!"

You will be pleased to know that SLiK www.slikinfo.org created a very tight process for its bulk purchase of solar hot water that has combatted this issue by coupling supply with install expectations. If you are going down this track please use the SLiK insights to manage the process so that you get maximum benefit from your system. We like to think that early investment in these types of systems has facilitated improved systems and processes. Without investment there will be no improvements. We encourage others to think beyond the dollar and jump in so that momentum for this type of change increases.



Kathleen sent in her story:

"Last year I was given the task of implementing a recycling program at Stramit, and after meeting with the rep from Veolia, I

went ahead and set up a system of recycling waste products including plastics, cardboard, general waste and office paper. I also set up a spreadsheet to track which bin needed emptying, when it was booked in for clearance, and when it was cleared etc. As a result I was awarded a Sustainability award for 2011 from Stramit - one that I am very proud of”.

Consider the following hierarchy of waste - recycling is great - but think first and foremost about “avoiding” in the first place. We were motivated to stop buying aluminum cans of drink several years ago once we learnt that they travelled the equivalent of six times round the world by the time they arrived in your shopping basket - mining the aluminum (which is a valuable and finite resource), exporting it for manufacture, then again to have marketing logos added, again to fill them with fizzy drink for which we pay as little as \$1.15. Think “avoid” during this season of “Excessmas” and you will benefit our beleaguered and unsustainable health system amongst many other things. It is estimated that up to 25% of food produced is wasted in the west/year. Veolia estimates a \$70/Tonne increase in cost to cater for the production of methane in landfill (which is 16 times more potent than CO2). Buying less and recycling waste at home makes good sense.



Sustainable Living in Kingborough



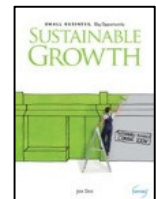
The SLiK Solar Hot Water bulk purchase mentioned in the last newsletter has signed up 90 participants this spring - SLiK will be monitoring recipients’ energy usage over the coming year to see what the savings are. See <http://www.slikinfo.org/default.html> for more SLiK information.



Bits 'n Pieces

Book Review

Sustainable Growth by John Dee



This great little book, commissioned by Sensis, is a must for all owners of small and medium business in Australia. It deals simply and compactly with the triple bottom line, green procurement, recycling, transport, energy and water savings, eco design, IT, and spreading the word.

The case studies are illuminating and inspirational. The early section on climate change sets out real science and explains simply the processes and historical perspective.

This invaluable book can be obtained FREE by business owners. Start 2012 armed with some strategies and tips for your workplace. Go to <http://about.sensis.com.au/small-business/free-sustainable-growth-book/>

Handy Tip

Hot water can be 25%, or more in some cases, of our household energy usage. A few quick tips to help reduce hot water and associated energy usage:

- ✓ Make sure your hot water system thermostat is not set too high (60C is suitable)
- ✓ Insulate hot water pipes to avoid wasting water while waiting for hot water to flow through
- ✓ Install a water efficient showerhead
- ✓ Take shorter showers - use a shower timer (4 minutes is a good time to aim for)
- ✓ Wash laundry in cold water - while some clothes need to be washed in hot water e.g. heavily soiled and stained clothes, most clothes can effectively be washed in cold
- ✓ Use your dishwasher only when you have a full load and use the economy cycle
- ✓ Flow-controlled aerators for taps are inexpensive and can reduce water flow by 50%
- ✓ Repair any dripping hot water taps



We would like to wish everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas and to send you this link www.youtube.com/watch?v=m06mQEHy8D4 so you can benefit from the more spiritual side of sustainability thinking.

Sarah, Andrew & Judy



*“If we do not change our direction, we are likely to end up where we are headed.”
(Chinese proverb)*