



Sustainability Reference Group

Meeting 5
Monday 28 February 2006, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Draft Minutes

Attendees

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Ron Smith | Sutherland Shire Council |
| Daniel Lovett | Warringah Council |
| Tony Mohr | Total Environment Centre |
| Steve Beaman | Department of Environment and Conservation |
| Simon Longstaff | St James Ethics Centre |
| Ken Kanofski | WSN Environmental Solutions (WSN) |
| Anita Mitchell | WSN |
| Anna Mitchell | WSN |
| Catherine Johnson | WSN (agenda item 4 only) |

Apologies

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| Liz Jeremy | Blacktown City Council |
| Matthew Taylor | Keep Australia Beautiful NSW |
| Jenny Kent | |
| Bob Verhey | Local Government Association |

1. Welcome and Agenda

Ken Kanofski welcomed the group.

2. Adoption of minutes from Meeting 4 and business arising

The minutes of Meeting 4 were adopted as a true and accurate record and will be posted on the WSN website.

3. Banarra Social Sustainability Report – Key Findings

Anita Mitchell introduced Richard Boele from Banarra Sustainability and Assurance to the group.

Richard Boele presented the key findings of his review of WSN's social sustainability indicators. Richard also provided comment on how WSN's 2004-2005 Annual Report compared to the 2003-2004 Report that he had previously assessed. Comments included:

- WSN had progressed significantly from the 2003-2004 Report to the 2004-2005 Report.
- WSN's reporting is well advanced compared to Australian competitors.
- Objectives and targets for indicators would improve the report.
- Customer satisfaction indicators had not yet been included.
- Perceptual indicators, i.e. staff views on culture etc had not yet been included.
- The report achieves a good balance between indicators and discussion of issues.
- OH&S indicators require further explanation and development.
- An inconsistency was identified between information provided about staff diversity in different sections of the report.
- A summary of whether commitments made in the previous report had been met would be a good addition to the report, as would specific information about how feedback from stakeholders has influenced the report.
- Some areas where WSN could broaden sustainability reporting in the future:
 - Supply chain management, eg downstream impacts.
 - Long-term health effects, eg staff, intergenerational impacts on communities.
 - Equity of access to services should WSN be privatised.

Anita Mitchell tabled information about how WSN has responded to the recommendations made in Banarra's report. WSN has already addressed some issues, other are in progress, while some recommendations are long-term.

Simon Longstaff asked Richard how important it is that WSN look at the less direct social impacts of its business. Ken Kanofski advised that WSN exports recyclable products via other companies, not directly. Paper is the only item that goes offshore to be processed. WSN does not import a large number of products, and imports are generally specialised technical equipment. Under WSN's old business model of outsourcing the operation of sites, the control of OHS and environment risks were outsourced too. Under the current business model, with most operational activities insourced, WSN has greater control of managing risks.

Richard Boele stated that WSN's state owned corporation peers are addressing the bigger picture of social impacts, so it will start to become relevant in sustainability reporting. There is an opportunity for WSN to take a lead in raising the issue of supply chain impacts in the industry.

Tony Mohr commented that WSN has the opportunity to assist in addressing the issue of E-waste in developing countries and associated health issues. Tony also commented that other important social issues for WSN include the disclosure of government relations, eg political donations; responsible lobbying of industry associations; and articulation of WSN's position on public policy; whistleblowing and the waste levy.

Anita Mitchell advised that WSN has ceased participation in some industry associations due to differing views. She also advised that WSN has a Protected Disclosures Policy to protect whistleblowers.

Steve Beaman commented that a storytelling approach can play an interim role in reporting where performance objectives or targets don't exist or are immature.

Richard Boele added that the Annual Report could be viewed as a conversation with stakeholders.

Daniel Lovett asked whether WSN has internal standards for social impact assessment. Anita Mitchell advised that WSN act in accordance with the Director General's requirements for Environmental Assessment of proposed developments.

Simon Longstaff questioned whether it is possible to assess the positive benefit that WSN has on local communities, eg employment creation, and whether it can be reported. Ken Kanofski advised that WSN does not collect this information at this time.

Richard Boele suggested that WSN identify each commitment made in the Annual Report, and report in the following Report on progress against those commitments.

Anita Mitchell thanked Richard Boele for his time and presentation and the group for their feedback.

4. Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey - Results

Ken Kanofski introduced Catherine Johnson to the group and outlined what WSN wanted to achieve through the stakeholder satisfaction survey.

Catherine Johnson presented the results of the survey conducted in November and December 2005. The results of the survey were quite positive, with WSN's stakeholder's giving the organisation an overall satisfaction rating of 8.1 out of 10.

Steve Beaman asked whether WSN had researched the broader community and their attitudes to waste.

Ken Kanofski advised while WSN had undertaken some work on gaining an understanding of community opinion for a recent tender, WSN's general approach towards this kind of research is cautious, as the general public is primarily our customer only through our Council customers.

Anita Mitchell advised that the information gathered in the survey would be used in the sustainability reporting process.

Catherine Johnson handed out new educational and landfill information brochures to the group.

5. WSN 2004-2005 Annual Report Feedback Session

Anna Mitchell asked the group for their feedback on the 2004-2005 Annual Report.

What stood out?

- Reporting of the \$5,000 fine – its positive that it was reported up front in the CEO and Chairman's Report.
- The Ecological Footprint.
- Colour coding of the different sections.
- The GRI based indicators.
- Trend data.
- The Report was too dense – too many words – but the structure is a success.
- The diagram of services was hard to understand.

What did you like about the Report?

- The trend data, greenhouse gas emissions data.
- Graphical presentation of information is excellent.
- Great to see an organisation achieving sustainability reporting.
- Independent assurance gives confidence to the reader.
- WSN are miles ahead of others in the industry – good job and shows it can be done.
- The Ecological Footprint.
- GRI format.

Areas for improvement?

- An inconsistency was identified between greenhouse gas emission figures on page 14 and page 58.
- Inclusion of targets or objectives for indicators, WSN could start by prioritising the key indicators first and tackling the big issues.
- Benchmarking - % incoming waste recovered/recycled/diversion against State Government long term targets.
- Include information about where waste is diverted to eg. How compost/greenwaste is used.
- Less text - More graphs or images.
- Normalisation of greenhouse gas figures, as the figure will go up if WSN wins more business. Reporting of total greenhouse gas emissions is still important.
- Include information about government relationships – interaction, supply chain, initiatives.
- Cross-reference graphs with the title of the related indicator.
- Place copies of the Report in the libraries of host councils.
- Provide the Report to the Sydney Catchment Management Authority, Sydney Coastal Group of Councils, Regional Organisations of Councils etc.
- Perceptual indicators would be useful for culture, odour etc.
- Bring indicators directory forward in the Report to improve navigability of the document.
- Examine supply chain impacts.

6. WSN Sustainability Policy

Deferred to next meeting.

7. SRG Evaluation

Anna Mitchell advised that WSN has engaged Peter Shmigel of Hyder Consulting to seek feedback from SRG members about their satisfaction with the SRG. Peter will be in touch with members in the next month. A report on the results of the evaluation will be presented at the next SRG meeting.

8. Future agenda items and meeting dates for 2006

The following agenda items were identified and will be addressed during 2006 and beyond:

- Sustainability Policy.
- SRG Evaluation.
- Macarthur Resource Recovery Project.
- Reporting of greenhouse gas emissions.
- WSN policy position in relation to State Government and Industry positions.
- Supply chain.
- UR-3R tour.

Anita Mitchell thanked all SRG members for their honesty and input to date. All comments are welcomed and beneficial to WSN.