

Given our status of the planet's driest island continent, that ~~and~~ drought years are said to peak on average every ten years, this review has the potential to forward plan for more than the stated twenty years and become an inbuilt mechanism for the benefit of our environment including the populace.

Every proposed action should be measurable with the outcomes answerable to Government as has occurred with Melbourne's transport network.

Major reviews of short duration should occur at intervals of not more than five years, perhaps by the mechanism of a Senate Select Committee, with a 'mandate' to extend the initial implementation process again measurable and answerable in five year blocks. Yearly reviews may be the province of the Auditor General's Department.

Major projects such as the Wimmera pipeline are heartening as is the introduction of Stage 3a water restrictions in Melbourne. It is to be hoped the former concept will be extended and that the latter will remain until the reservoirs are full. Irrigation areas need much assistance, please continue to fund rebates for undelivered water.

As a measurable outcome it will be of interest to observe whether the education component pertaining to metropolitan water saving/use has been successful or whether household water use increases because of altered perceptions with recent rainfalls.

Like the purchase of watertanks and other water saving devices, rebates should remain however price monitoring particularly in the context of the former may be of value. Try comparing the cost now and a couple of years ago.

Investigation of soil/water acidification comparing use of biosolids and current farm fertilizer use should be relatively easy.

Acidification problems from effluent which could often be overcome by alternative solutions such as Rotaloo or Biolytic meet bureaucratic resistance due to lack of foresight. The areas of the Nisely Hill Beach and the Yarra Valley are two such areas. This may be local or State government or a Water Catchment area Authority. Failure to consider options is uneconomical and prolongs the unhealthy condition of river/sea/ground discharges.

The White Paper acknowledges the presence of 'some 1000 weed species and at least 250 pest animal species in Victoria while at the same time notes the lack of fauna and flora biodiversity.

The Government controls the limitation of two of the more notable animal pests - the rabbit and the fox - but generally does it in a way which kills our fauna by way of these eating poisoned corpses and broadcasts as to the effect such toxins have on our soils and waterways are virtually non-existent.

This raises the question as to the existence of studies relating to baiting of areas and loss of biodiversity. By extension, in city etc we poison mice/rats who die outside to be eaten by fauna.

Akin to this is the method we employ to rid ourselves of the blackberry or gorse for example.

We use toxins when there are many unemployed and disaffected manual labour would have a more ecologically sustainable footprint.

Regarding biodiversity, it is some 70% of native vegetation has been cleared' then it is more than time that housing development/exhibits in particular be required to remove/store/propagate and replant the flora from the homesteads. The current 10% open land should be increased, old vegetation protected including a tree 'dropline' Regulation. This is the habitat of the insects and the birds, possums and reptiles.

A farm, being a business, requires hard data to show the benefit of extending remnant habitat, road verge or otherwise, in terms of the dollar return to the farming family as well as to the environment.

Does there exist the possibility that State government efforts be combined with that of knowledge sought in the last paragraph and the Federal government Drought Force payments?

There is a wealth of knowledge held by the indigenous and scientific communities as to the nutritional and pharmaceutical uses of much of the flora of this State.

If this knowledge is developed in terms of product outcomes, be it, as simple as the 'perennial' 'Van Drizy' of the Western district which is said to be more nutritious than farinaceous crops such as the potato, if the State government was to fund the process for a given percentage of the returns, surely the investment would pay dividends to further the expansion of biodiversity? The potential gains for the State in all terms are enormous and will help offset medium and long term necessary outlays. (Policy Q 9, page 14)  
( " Q 6, page 12)

Finally, it is suggested that the way to "meet the demands of an increasing population within the ecologically sustainable boundaries of our Island and water resources" is to make each area within a region as independent as practicable from existing and future 'mainstream' infrastructure.

The value of water tanks and sewerage disposal options have been mentioned. The value of the A.N.U. silicon strip technology and Arthur O'Connor's Huskpower windgenerator (among others) may indeed provide excess energy and development of regional industry (consider the Yallourn area), to assist in general environment health and consequent carbon emission trade-off gain, minimise infrastructure needs and costs and leave an increasingly positive legacy for future generations.

A strengthening of Regulation may be required and it would be serious if this review did not examine the potential effect of G.M. crops on native vegetation enhancement or the spread of pest insects.