



*Commissioner for Environmental
Sustainability*

State of the Environment Report

Community Consultation Report

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1. Introduction

A key objective for Victoria's inaugural Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (CES) is the preparation of the Victorian State of the Environment (SoE) Report.

Socom was engaged by the Commissioner in early 2005 to consult with a broad range of stakeholders on the SoE reporting process.

The consultation, which occurred during February and March 2005, supports the Commissioner's desire for the Victorian SoE Report to be relevant to all stakeholders.

Stakeholders engaged during this consultation included policymakers, business, industry, non-government organisations, local government, academics, students and the wider Victorian community.

Interested parties were given the opportunity to express their views in face-to-face interviews, group workshops conducted throughout Victoria and/or by completing written submissions.

More than 300 people were contacted directly during the consultation, over 60 people attended workshops around the state and over 30 written submissions were received.

Specifically, the consultation aimed to provide a snapshot of community and stakeholder views on:

- Their major concerns for the Victorian environment;
- The preliminary environmental themes identified by the Commissioner;
- Major issues that might be addressed within each theme;
- An assessment model that might be used within the report;
- Possible structure and format for the report; and
- Appropriate information and data sources that might assist the Commissioner with the undertaking of the SoE Report.

This consultation report is structured to provide an analysis of these views as provided during:

- Peak body engagements; and
- Workshop sessions and in supporting written submissions.

The consultation process has provided a clear insight and numerous practical suggestions regarding the environmental issues of concern, key issues affecting Victoria's environment and a reporting structure that may be of maximum benefit to Victorians. A series of recommendations is contained within the final section of this report.

2. Methodology

The consultation process was structured around three key stages: material preparation, awareness-raising and engagement.

2.1 Material preparation

This stage of the consultation involved the preparation of supporting materials. These materials included:

- Media materials (including media release, backgrounder and FAQs);
- Public notice advertisement;
- Web material;
- Bulletin articles for specific distribution; and
- Invitation letter to key stakeholders to participate in the workshops and provide a written submission.

In addition to these materials, a consultation guide and background paper was prepared to support the consultation process. The purpose of this document was:

- To provide information on the role of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability;
- To provide information on the State of the Environment Report process;
- To propose an approach to public reporting on the state of Victoria's environment as the basis for discussion and feedback;
- To generate discussion on reporting themes, environmental issues and pressures; and
- Advise how stakeholders can participate in the consultation.

2.2 Awareness-raising

The second stage of the consultation involved the dissemination of the supporting material. The focus of this stage of the consultation was to raise awareness to ensure the greatest possible participation. This occurred via the following means:

- Letters to 280 key stakeholders inviting them to participate in the Melbourne and regional workshops and to make written submissions was sent on 23rd February. Follow-up calls for the regional workshops were made on 9th and 10th of March.
- A media release was sent out on 23rd February to just under fifty newspapers in Melbourne, suburbs and regional Victoria. Follow-ups occurred on 25th February.
- Public notice advertisements were published as follows:
 - The Age – Sat 26th Feb and Wed 2nd March
 - Herald Sun – Sat 26th Feb and Wed 2nd March
 - Weekly Times – Wed 2nd March
- Bulletins were prepared and distributed to:
 - Environment Victoria for their Group Members Bulletin. The article appeared in 'E Bulletin' on 24th February and appeared on the website as part of the calendar of events.
 - The Australian Industry Group (AIG) for their bulletin and appeared for approximately two weeks.
 - The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) for their environment 'E Bulletin'. The MAV also distributed the article to all key environment contacts in Victorian local councils.
- Dedicated pages on the CES website, with information on the State of the Environment Report process, the consultation process and how members of the Victorian community may make written submissions. These pages included:
 - Frequently asked questions;
 - Links to make a written submission online; and
 - Downloadable copies of the Consultation Guide and Background Paper

2.3 Engagement

The third stage of the consultation was the engagement process which was grouped as follows:

One-on-one interviews

The targets for these sessions were peak bodies with a strong interest in issues that might be addressed within the SoE Report. The program of one-on-one meetings with peak bodies is provided below:

Organisation
Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Victorian Local Governance Association
Environment Victoria
Municipal Association of Victoria
Australian Industry Group
Victorian Farmers Federation

During the course of the consultation, contact was made with other organisations interested in participating in the consultation. In most cases these organisations were unable to participate in other available consultation forums. As such, they were provided with the opportunity to express their views in one-to-one meetings. These groups are listed here.

Organisation
Yarra Valley Water
Minerals Council of Australia, Victorian Division
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology 'Re-imagining the suburbs' project team
Australian Conservation Foundation

Group Workshops

Facilitated group workshops occurred for stakeholder groupings from a number of categories, including local councils, industry (water, power and manufacturing), organised environmental groups, community groups (environmental and recreational), indigenous groups and academics.

Four workshops were undertaken in Melbourne and four regional workshops were undertaken in Geelong, Bendigo, Benalla and Traralgon. The schedule of the meetings is provided below.

Location	Melb.	Melb.	Bendigo	Geelong	Traralgon	Benalla
Dates	Wed 16 th March	Thur 17 th March	Tues 22 nd March	Tues 22 nd March	Wed 23 rd March	Wed 23 rd March
Times	9-11 am 1-3 pm	9-11 am 1-3 pm	1-3 pm	1-3 pm	1-3 pm	1-3pm

Written submissions

The wider community was provided the opportunity to have their say on the contents and structure of the SoE Report by providing written submissions either electronically or via mail.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment Customer Service Centre was used to provide information on the consultation process to the public and to provide copies of the consultation guide as requested. Alternatively, interested parties were able to down-load information on the consultation, including the Consultation Guide and Background Paper, from the dedicated section on the Commissioner's website.

A total of 29 written submissions were received by the close of the consultation period. These may be categorised as follows:

Category	No of Submissions
Peak Bodies/Associations	2
Local Government	4
Environmental NGOs	6
Water Sector	1
Industry (incl Agriculture)	2
Academia	3
Other/ Broader Victorian Community	7
**Government Agencies	4

** CES has undertaken direct consultation and assessment of government agency submissions.

3. Peak stakeholder groups findings

3.1 Summary

Peak bodies shared a number of views and opinions regarding the SoE Report and the role of the Commissioner. Given that the peak bodies consulted were diverse, the views and opinions expressed were equally as diverse. Four very clear messages which emerged from the consultation follow:

The type of reporting

The issue of whether SoE reporting should be based purely on environmental matters or based on a triple bottom line assessment was raised by many peak bodies.

This debate saw two clear views. The first view was that SoE reporting should only be based on environmental matters as this is the primary intent of SoE reporting. There was concern that the environment would lose out if triple bottom line assessment was to be included, for example, in the formation of recommendations. There was common agreement among those with this opinion (primarily environmental NGOs and local government peak groups) that the SoE Report will need to be explicit about the absence of an economic and social assessment.

The second view, which was expressed by business groups (AIG & VECCI), was that social and economic matters should be factored into the SoE Report. However, there was recognition that the Commissioner may not necessarily be resourced to undertake this level of reporting.

Regardless of the views expressed, there was common agreement that separating the environment, social and economic factors will be a challenge. At a minimum, and to retain the report's effectiveness, most peak bodies agreed that making recommendations based purely on environmental factors will result in the need to assess against social and economic imperatives later.

Tapping into local government knowledge

A number of peak bodies noted that it was important that the Commissioner tap into the work currently undertaken by local government in Victoria. A number of councils have completed or commenced work on their own SoE Reports, and this work needs to be acknowledged, and where possible, incorporated within the Victorian SoE Report.

Making government accountable

A number of peak bodies expressed that view that the State Government needs to be made more accountable on matters relating to the Victorian environment.

This view was strongly held by environmental NGOs, who in some instances regarded the prospect of a Victorian SoE Report as another tool that would report and monitor the Victorian environment, rather than necessarily make concrete recommendations.

It was felt by these peak bodies that for the SoE Report to have impact and positive benefits for the environment, it would need to contain recommendations linked directly to existing government policy.

Reducing Ecological Footprint

A number of peak bodies noted that the importance of reducing society's ecological footprint can not be underestimated. In their view, environmental targets should be about reducing society's ecological footprint and that this is not really the focus at present.

Water reform was cited as one such example, where the focus is on building more pipes and pumps at the expense of other aspects of the environment. Demand management is seen as being another, more appropriate means of addressing water shortages and has no ecological footprint ramifications.

Reporting on the impact of society's ecological footprint would be useful in the SoE Report.

3.2 Environmental concerns

While there were a number of significant environmental concerns raised by peak bodies, the most common concerns raised were:

- Climate change, particularly the impact of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Soil salinity and acidity;
- Water supply and groundwater sustainability;
- Land clearing and native vegetation removal; and
- Pest plants and animals.

A comprehensive review of opinion and view by stakeholder group is provided within the next section of this report.

Some of the peak bodies have already undertaken research on identifying and, in some instances, prioritising, sustainability and environmental issues. All have agreed to provide the Commissioner with access to this information.

Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry Survey

VECCI surveyed their member base in 2004 seeking views on sustainability and environmental issues. The issues of most concern to members were:

- Water reliability and supply;
- Energy reliability;
- Air pollution; and
- Greenhouse.

Municipal Association of Victoria

The MAV's Strategic Environment Advisory Group compiles an annual priority list of environmental issues that it will progress during the 12 month period. For 2005 the following issues were identified:

- Native vegetation and weed management;
- Water;
- Waste and resource recovery; and
- Greenhouse and climate change.

Australian Industry Group

Key issues identified by AIG via its member survey include water, emissions, odour, noise and solid waste management.

There was no provision to prioritise these issues within the research survey.

3.3 Reporting themes and issues

A number of peak bodies were confused at the inclusion of the natural and cultural heritage theme. Many feel that it sits outside the bounds of a report that is intended to examine the state of the environment.

Other theme issues recorded during this phase of the consultation include:

- Environmental issues are interlinked. SoE Report should not take a silo approach, but should instead assess the impact on different environmental issues across themes;
- Important that there is an awareness of the competing influence and trends of different environmental initiatives;
- It would be useful with the human settlements theme to report on 'green building design' and measure progress made in the establishment of green buildings in Victoria.
- Resource consumption and consumption patterns should be addressed;
- Human settlements and natural and cultural heritage are a pressure rather than a theme that might be examined; and
- Important to report on accumulative impacts.

3.4 Pressure-state-response model

Peak bodies' views regarding the Pressure-State-Response model ranged from supportive to in-different, with the majority falling within the supportive category.

Importantly, no stakeholder was vehemently opposed to this model or suggested an appropriate alternative. In most cases, peak bodies chose to favour this model because:

- It has been effectively applied in other jurisdictions;
- It has been tested and refined in other jurisdictions; and
- It represents a logical and, in most cases, a holistic approach.

3.5 Indicators

All peak bodies expressed a keenness to participate in future dialogue with the Commissioner. Specifically, there was an interest in working with the Commissioner on developing the reporting framework and indicators.

Other points recorded during the consultation with peak bodies included the following:

- Stakeholders and community need to be educated about indicators before meaningful discussion and debate can occur;
- Indicators should include some measure for the impact of road development and public transport usage;
- Indicators for population growth should be included;
- To test behavioural change, indicators assessing awareness, attitude and understanding of environmental issues should be included; and
- Combining consistent datasets will be a challenge, as many different methodologies are used in their generation.

3.6 Information and data sources

The peak bodies were very strongly of the opinion that the Commissioner should tap into existing data and information sets, and avoid unnecessary replication and/or duplication. All stakeholders listed are willing to work closely with the Commissioner's office in providing assistance in accessing the information and data sources listed below.

Victorian Farmers Federation

- "The Health of Our Catchments: A Victorian Report Card 2002." Victorian Catchment Management Council.
- "Inquiry on the Impact and Trends in Soil Acidity." Environment and Natural Resources Committee, Parliament of Victoria.
- "The Impact of Acid Soils in Victoria." Department of Primary Industries (Rutherglen Research Institute)

Municipal Association of Victoria

- "2002 Victorian Local Government Environment Management Survey", MAV.
- "Victorian Local Government Weed Management Report: Programs, Resources and Management Approaches" MAV, June 2003.
- "Native Vegetation Management and Local Government – A Report on the Capacity of Victorian Local Government to Undertaken Native Vegetation Management", MAV, 2005.
- "State of the Environment Report 2005" Hume City Council.
- "Triple Bottom Line Reporting in Australia" Department of Environment and Heritage, June 2003.
- "Environment Indicators for Metropolitan Melbourne" Australian Institute of Urban Studies and the City of Melbourne (numerous volumes published since 1998 (See following website for full details www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/redirect.cfm?r=18))

Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry

- VECCI Survey of Member base regarding environmental / sustainability issues of concern

Minerals Council of Australia (Victoria)

- "Enduring Value – the Australian Mineral Industry Framework for Sustainable Development 2004". MCA (Vic)
- Individual mining project Environment Effect Studies.

Australian Industry Group

- "Australia Manufacturing and China – Opportunities and Challenges", AIG, 2004.
- "Outcomes of the Australian Industry Group National Energy Market Survey 2001", AIG 2001

Yarra Valley Water

- "2004 Urban Development Program Annual Report", DSE 2004

4. Analysis by stakeholder category

The following table is intended to provide an overview of the views held by different peak body groups on environmental concerns, themes and priority issues, the P-S-R model, indicators and products and theme reports.

Stakeholder category	Environmental concerns	Themes & issues	P-S-R	Indicators	Report structure, purpose and outcomes	Products and reports
Local government (MAV and VLGA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change Soil stability and salinity Water supply and quality Waste and resource recovery Stormwater management Native vegetation and pest management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must recognise the themes are linked Some themes may be regionally specific 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive of model Model must not duplicate or add another layer of reporting on LG If possible should measure success too. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wish to be involved in further discussions on the indicators, but believe that ANZECC a good starting point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must not duplicate work already undertaken by LG Must not add to the current level of reporting required on LG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend report in two part, summary and comprehensive
Environmental NGOs (EV and ACF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change Biodiversity Unsustainable practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land clearing Product redundancies Measures for attitudes and awareness Reliance on brown coal Globalisation issues (material flows) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally supportive of model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include measurement of impact of population growth Include road and private transport impacts Indicators should be developed and tested by independent scientific panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must contain robust recommendations to ensure effectiveness and relevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release themed reports in advance of 2008 to help ensure that environmental issues and the activities of the office remain in the public spotlight
Industry/mining (AIG, VECCI & MCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water – availability of supply Energy- availability of supply Climate change/greenhouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should include examination of the economic impact (with reference to global competition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection to PSR model, but believe that it should include some measure of financial in keeping with TBL principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comment or views provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should not recommend new policy or recommend policy change. Should retain focus on environment only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should include a separate document or report that includes recommendations to government
Farming (VFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil erosion Soil acidity & salinity Pest plants and animals Fuel reduction burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial or cost impact theme should be included as separate or within existing suite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objection to PSR expressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No views or preference expressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report needs to take account of the overall population pressures place on agricultural land and production outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No views or preference expressed
Water sector (YVW and VWIA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality and quantity Impact of climate change on water availability Ground water and aquifers Land and soil degradation Pest plants and animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoring environmental flows Stormwater management Any themes must add value to work already being undertaken by CMAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive of model provided it does not result in duplication of efforts currently undertaken within this sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to view on PSR. Sector wishes to be involved in the further development of indicators should this occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, believe that report needs to exhibit a focus on the physical environment only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No views or preferences expressed

5. Workshop and submission findings

5.1 Summary

There was general consensus that the themes outlined within the consultation literature are appropriate for inclusion and assessment within the Victorian SoE Report. However, consultation raised the following important points in relation to the themes:

- The fact that there are clear links and relationships between themes;
- The need to highlight the impact of energy consumption and production either within existing theme categories or as a separate theme; and
- The perceived lack of relevance of the natural and cultural heritage theme within the SoE Report.

Environmental concerns and major issues within the discussed themes tended to reflect the interests and backgrounds of consultation participants.

However, the major concerns identified across all groups were:

- The impact of climate change on Victoria's atmosphere;
- The impact of pest plants and animals on Victoria's biodiversity;
- The impact of soil salinity and acidity on land quality;
- The impact of environmental flows on Victoria's inland water quality;
- The impact of rising nutrient levels (sewerage discharge) on Victorian sea and marine habitats;
- The continuing impact of private rather than public transport; and
- Low level community awareness and understanding about the current state of Victoria's environment.

In general, environmental issues tended to reflect and support the major environmental concerns identified.

The majority of participants supported the Pressure-State-Response model, with only a few alternatives or additions suggested which tended to focus on adding a robust recommendation element to the SoE Report. There was limited discussion on indicators with many stakeholders expressing a desire for further information on the options available. There was a clear willingness to participate in further consultation to refine indicator development.

Numerous useful information and data sources were recommended by all participants and these are noted in the following sections.

5.2 Environmental Concerns

The range of environmental concerns identified during the workshop and within written submissions reflected the interests of participants.

All participants were asked to identify the main concerns they have for the Victorian environment. Typically, these would reflect their respective areas of interest and their location in the state.

Atmosphere

Within the identified theme of atmosphere, most workshop participants expressed concern about:

- the impact of climate change;
- the level of greenhouse gas emissions; and
- general air quality, particularly in urban settings.

Biodiversity

The most common concern expressed by workshop participants focused on the impact of pest plants and animals on Victoria's biodiversity. Many participants also expressed their concern about the impact of habitat loss from land clearing and logging practices in the state.

Land

Concerns about land tended to focus on soil conditions, with notable concern expressed about:

- Acid soil (particularly acid sulphate);
- Soil and land salinity;
- Soil erosion; and
- The impact of agricultural practices on soil and land condition.

Water (Inland)

Concerns in relation to inland waters varied considerably and participants noted the widest range of concerns within this theme. The most commonly cited concerns regarding inland waters are:

- The lack of environmental flows; and
- The management of storm water.

Other, less commonly cited concerns include:

- The general demand, availability and sustainability of surface water; and
- The impact of current agricultural practices on water quality.

Water (Estuaries and sea)

Similar to concerns expressed about inland waters, there was a spread of views regarding estuary and sea, with no clear priority concern emerging from workshop sessions. Concerns about estuary and sea waters include:

- The impact on marine habitats from rising nutrient levels (sewerage discharge);
- Impact of greenhouse gas production of sea levels; and
- The possible impact of off-shore oil exploration on subsidence of coastal areas.

Human Settlement

The most common concerns about the impact of human settlement on the environment centred on the view that current waste disposal methods are inefficient and that more public education initiatives are needed to achieve a notable improvement.

Other commonly held concerns as expressed by workshop participants include:

- Too much planning focus on private rather than public transport;
- The concentration of housing and development in environmentally sensitive regions, particularly coastal areas;
- The need to balance increased rural development and conservation; and
- Redundant manufacturing processes and products.

Natural and Cultural Heritage

Discussion and views in respect to concerns about natural and cultural heritage was limited during workshop sessions. Many participants viewed the inclusion of the word 'natural' as being superfluous, believing that natural heritage would be covered within earlier theme categories.

In respect to cultural heritage, several participants noted that the lack of planning controls for cultural landscapes as a concern that could impact on this area.

Other

There were a number of other concerns expressed about the Victorian environment that do not necessarily fit within the existing theme areas.

Many participants expressed serious concern about:

- The lack of community awareness and understanding about the current state of Victoria's environment;
- The lack of renewable energy, reliance on brown coal and increasing energy consumption; and

- The lack of choice and high cost of environmentally preferred products.

Several participants expressed views that, strictly speaking, do not fall within one of the physical environment themes, but rather, focused on the SoE Report itself. This tended to focus on the notion that there is currently too much monitoring and reporting, but very little implementation of activities to address the problems identified. Similarly, some participants expressed the view that it is vital for the SoE report to focus only on the environment and not on financial/economic issues.

5.3 Themes and issues

Using the seven environmental themes identified within the consultation guide and background paper as a starting point, workshop participants were asked to:

- Identify additional themes that might be reported on within the SoE Report;
- Identify what they felt to be the main issues affecting each of the seven themes;
- Raise questions by environment themes that they felt the Commissioner should seek to answer within the SoE Report; and
- Suggest and identify possible sources of information

Information sources are listed in this report as either actual reports or organisations that participants felt would be useful to the Commissioner.

Additional Themes and General Comments

While the vast majority of workshop participants were supportive of the themes identified by the Commissioner within the consultation guide and background paper, there was a range of general views expressed about these and additional suggestions offered.

The most commonly mentioned additional themes in rank order were:

- Energy production and consumption;
- Education to assess performance of public education initiatives and to also identify areas in which such initiatives might be required;
- Waste (separate to human settlements theme);
- Future to identify emerging trends and issues;
- Places at risk (similar to the model adopted within the British SoE Report);
- Economic cost to assess the financial cost of environmental impacts; and
- Noise.

The strongest and most common general view regarding the existing identified themes was that the SoE Report would need to acknowledge and address the interrelatedness of several themes. The most common example cited was the fact that land/soil quality has a direct impact on

water quality and also that activity occurring within human settlements impacts across the atmosphere, land and water themes.

In addition to this point, it was also suggested by a number of parties that:

- The natural and cultural heritage theme seemed out of place within a report into the state of the physical environment. At a minimum, the notion of natural heritage be dropped as it would be covered within other theme areas; and
- The separate theme of water (inland) and water (estuaries and sea) be merged into one theme and retitled aquaculture.

Atmosphere

Major issues

The most commonly cited issues within the atmosphere theme identified by participants:

- The impact of energy consumption and production on greenhouse gas (including the effectiveness of government public education initiatives);
- The impact of industry and agriculture on greenhouse gas emissions;
- The impact of car use on air quality and the effectiveness of government initiatives to increase public transport usage.
- The impact of climate change on other environmental themes, including threatened species and vegetation.

Recommended data and information sources

- "Cities for Climate Change Protection Report" International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)
- "Phoenix Fridge Project Report" Moreland Energy Foundations (for data on old refrigerator emissions)
- Air quality monitoring reports published by the EPA.
- CRC for Greenhouse Accounting
- Gippsland Air Quality Monitoring Network – EPA Traralgon
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports on global climate change
- Victorian and Australian Greenhouse Offices

Biodiversity

Major issues

The most commonly cited issues within the biodiversity theme identified by participants are:

- The impact of climate change on shifting habitat of fauna and wildlife destruction;
- The impacts of pest plants and animals (including an assessment of weed control enforcement);
- The impact of land clearing and native vegetation loss;
- The impact of farming practices;
- The impact of changing land use patterns (from agricultural to urban);
- The effective identification of likely future pressures; and
- The impact of GE cropping trials.

Recommended data and information sources

- Ecological Vegetation Class Mapping by Local Councils
- Landscape plans developed by National Trust and the RSPB
- Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre
- Invasive Species Council (www.invasives.org.au)
- Greening Australia
- Trust for Nature

Land

Major issues

The most commonly cited issues within the land theme identified by participants are:

- Soil loss due to depleted ground cover (erosion);
- Salinity (particularly in the Murray Darling Basin);
- Contamination from industrial activity including land fill sites;
- The impact of changing land use patterns;
- Impact of agricultural activity on land and soil quality;
- Soil acidification;
- Impact of land clearing; and
- Impact of GE cropping trials.

Recommended data and information sources

- Containment sites register
- Erosion Management Overlays
- Acid Sulphate soils Overlays
- CMA data on erosion compiled by as part of respective soil health strategies
- Preliminary mapping of acid sulphate soils by the Victorian Coastal Council

- CSIRO report into land subsidence occurring in the Gippsland region as the result of extraction from the Latrobe Aquifer system
- Biodynamic Agricultural Association of Australia
- Future Family Farms Research Project - DPC

Water (Inland)

Major issues

The most commonly cited issues within the inland water theme identified by participants are:

- The impact on ground water and aquifers from current surface water use behaviours and patterns;
- Impact of introduced species within inland waterways;
- The impact of land clearing and agricultural practices on water quality;
- The effectiveness of existing stormwater and litter pollution management;
- The long term impact of recycled water on catchments;
- Levels of environmental flows required to restore rivers to healthy status; and
- Impacts of septic tanks and townships not linked to reticulated system.

Recommended data and information sources

- CMA River Health Strategies and Stream Condition Indices
- North East Water Quality Strategy
- ICLEI water campaign report
- Domestic waste water and water supply and demand strategies developed by Victorian water authorities
- DSE Data Warehouse
www.vicwaterdata.net
- CRC for Catchment Hydrology

Water (Estuaries and seas)

Major issues

The most commonly cited issues within the estuaries and sea waters theme identified by participants are:

- Impact of stormwater, pollutants and sewerage discharges;
- Impact of dredging in Port Phillip Bay and general estuary dredging and clearing;
- Impact of commercial and recreational fishing;
- Impact of climate change on sea level and temperatures; and
- Impact of marine pests (including ship ballast water discharge).

Recommended data and information sources

- Victorian Catchment Management Council reporting data
- EPA's beach and nutrient level reports
- Marine data sets from the Museum of Victoria
- Gippsland Coastal Board/CSIRO study into the impacts of climate change
- The Victorian Coastal Report 2004 – Victorian Coastal Council
- Bay Action Reports – DSE
- Marine National Parks Management Plans

Natural and Cultural Heritage

Major issues

It should be noted that there was some concern expressed about the appropriateness of this theme within a report. Many participants felt that the report should focus primarily on the physical environment.

The most commonly cited issues within the natural and cultural heritage theme identified by participants are:

- The destruction of significant sites including indigenous sites;
- Impact of salinity and pollution on the built environment;
- The impact of the changing nature of the agricultural landscape due to demographic changes (i.e the impact of urban expansion on rural landscapes);
- Impact of introduced species on natural landscapes;
- Impact of wind farms; and
- Impact of the loss of old growth forests.

Recommended data and information sources

- Commonwealth SoE Report provides an assessment of the historic environment
- Council planning schemes and heritage strategies
- Heritage Victoria

Human Settlements

Major issues

The issues of human energy consumption and the means by which energy is produced in Victorian was regarded by many workshop participants as being an issue of such importance that it is deserving of its own separate theme.

The other most commonly raised issues identified by consultation participants are:

- The impact of landscape loss due to urban growth and development;
- The effectiveness of waste reduction and management;
- The impacts of pollution on human health;
- Impact of a continued reliance on auto transport;
- Impact of human consumption patterns across sectors;
- Management of sewerage in smaller townships (including septic);
- Impact of the sea change effect and demographic shifts (particularly on coastal areas); and
- Impact of current human attitudes toward, and understanding of, the environment.

Recommended data and information sources

- Local government Ecological Sustainable Development and Water Sensitive Urban Design frameworks
- Environmental Indicators for Metropolitan Melbourne, Australian Institute of Urban Studies & City of Melbourne
- EcoRecycle for recycling and landfill data
- Building Commission
- Bicycle Victoria

5.4 Pressure-State-Response model

Generally, workshop participants supported the Pressure-State-Response model put forward in the consultation guide and background paper.

As noted earlier in this report, there is a polarity of views regarding the scope of the SoE Report. This will have an impact on application of the agreed reporting model.

Representatives from industry and the farming sector tend to hold the view that the PSR model should not be limited to an examination and/or assessment of environmental sustainability, but should be expanded to encompass sustainable development in keeping with TBL principles.

On the other hand, environmental and community groups, CMAs and some local municipalities tended to suggest that the P-S-R model be applied to a narrow and specific focus only on the physical environment and matters pertaining to environmental sustainability.

A few additional elements were suggested by workshop participants and those who completed written submissions. It was felt that these should either be incorporated within the existing P-S-R model or within a separate model and included:

- Risks and threats to the environment over time;
- State of community awareness and level of education; and
- Drivers

Two written submissions advocated that the 'Plan-Do-Monitor-Review' reporting model used in implementing ISO certified environmental management systems could be adapted to suit the objectives of the Victorian SoE Report.

5.5 Indicators

Discussion on indicators in workshops or within written submissions was limited, possibly the direct result of limited knowledge in this area.

Two written submissions supported the adoption of the Australian and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council (ANZECC) indicators, while others, notably local government and CMAs, suggested that it would be most efficient for the Commissioner to utilise indicators that are already established.

Several stakeholders expressed the desire to be involved in further more detailed discussions on the development of appropriate indicators should this occur.

6. Making the SoE Report useful to stakeholders

During engagement of stakeholders from across categories, a number of practical suggestions were offered on what might be done to make the SoE Report relevant and useful to their constituent.

These suggestions include:

- Provide better insight into local solutions by focusing on current management practices undertaken at the regional level;
- Benchmark the state of Victoria’s environment against international and interstate examples;
- Analyse the competing influence and trends of different environment initiatives (i.e. the impact of water policy on greenhouse gas emissions);
- Measure the costs to industry and business of existing environmental regulation and compliance (i.e. assess impact on sustainability outcomes);
- Include measurement of business success in achieving sustainability outcomes;
- Report on other aspects of government intervention, such as the EPA landfill levy and the impact this has had on landfill scale across Victoria; and
- Ensure the report includes firm messages on long term impact of certain behaviours (i.e. “in 2020 water resources will run out, however, if business does a, b and c water will be available for longer”).

7. Recommendations

An analysis of information gathered during consultation reveals a number of areas and actions that should be considered in the development of Victoria's SoE Report.

It should be noted however, that some of these recommendations (notably those relating to assessing the performance of education initiatives) may, in fact, be covered by some of the other functions and outputs of the office. In such instances, it is important that this be highlighted in future communications with the Victorian community.

7.1 Report structure, purpose & outcomes

Recommendation 1

The SoE Report should provide sufficient analysis of the effectiveness of existing public education initiatives and also identify where such initiatives are required.

Recommendation 2

The SoE Report should include a comparative analysis of how Victoria is performing against national and international benchmarks.

Recommendation 3

The SoE Report should provide concrete recommendations on how certain issues and/or problems might be addressed. This will help negate the perception among some community members that the SoE Report is another layer of reporting and monitoring.

7.2 Themes

Recommendation 1

Include an additional theme that focuses on energy consumption and production.

Recommendation 2

Add a section within each theme report that examines the impact and relationship of identified issues across themes.

Recommendation 3

Revise the natural and cultural heritage theme to only include cultural heritage issues.

Recommendation 4

Add a theme or section within existing themes that specifically addresses emerging trends and threats.

7.3 Indicators

Recommendation 1

Undertake further consultation with interested parties to identify and if necessary develop new indicators that might be used within the SoE Report.

Recommendation 2

Appoint scientific panels to assess, agree and where necessary develop indicators for each of the identified environmental themes.

7.4 Products and theme reports

Recommendation 1

Release individual theme reports in advance of final comprehensive report as a means of achieving continual community awareness of the functions of the CES and to highlight state of environment.

Recommendation 2

Where recommendation 1 is not possible, prepare annual SoE Report update bulletins in the lead up to the final report release.

Recommendation 3

Release two version of the final report – a larger comprehensive version for policy makers and management and the summary snap shot version for the broader Victorian community.

7.5 Other

Recommendation 1

Work with local government and CMAs to ensure that unnecessary duplication of reporting models and indicators does not occur.