three, four, five:

3 Challenges, 4 Principles, 5 Actions for a Sustainable Future.

Report to the Government of South Australia on implementing the State Strategic Plan. 2004
The Premier’s Round Table on Sustainability
Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

The State Strategic Plan is the expression of this state’s commitment to its future. The Round Table has chosen to focus its first report to the government of South Australia on the implementation of the Plan.

A significant goal of the State Strategic Plan is to: ‘… make South Australia world-renowned for being clean, green and sustainable. This will boost community wellbeing, safeguard future generations and contribute to our state’s prosperity.’

**SA State Strategic Plan 2004**

Objective Three: Attaining Sustainability

We must address our energy use, our treatment of the natural systems that support us, and the impact our settlements have on the environment, if we are to fulfil this goal. We also need to address the ways in which sustainability priorities interact with a range of targets right across the State Strategic Plan, such as those relating to improving our business environment, increasing our population, increasing exports, investing in strategic infrastructure and improving public sector performance.

This report lists three major challenges to South Australia’s sustainability; offers four principles to underpin the implementation of the State Strategic Plan; and covers five areas of immediate action to deliver on the Plan.

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Summary of Recommendations

The State Strategic Plan makes a good start on the delivery of a sustainable future for South Australia. This report makes a range of recommendations aimed at ensuring that the Plan and its implementation deliver clear, sustainable outcomes for the State.

Three Challenges for the Future.
The Round Table recommends that government, business and the community take into account the following three challenges in implementing the Plan, and in developing the next iteration of the Plan:

- Climate change
- The vulnerability of our natural systems
- The need to manage within ecological constraints.

Four Principles.
The Round Table recommends that government, business and the community adopt the following principles when implementing the Plan:

- Recognise absolute ecological limits to development and keep all economic activity within those limits.
- Reflect the costs that economic activity and consumption impose on future South Australians.
- Financially reward those acts that improve environmental outcomes and are part of the solution.
- Remove all impediments and barriers to improvement of environmental outcomes.

Five Action Areas.

Action 1. Leadership in Sustainability.
The Round Table recommends that government processes show leadership in demonstrating how sustainability can become an integral part of doing business, including in the implementation of the State Strategic Plan. In this report we list a number of examples of the level of leadership required.

Action 2. Energy and Climate Change.
To implement the State Strategic Plan’s targets for climate change and energy use, the Round Table recommends that the government deliver a true Triple A Energy Rating for South Australia through actions addressing:

- Abatement (of greenhouse gases)
- Awareness (to drive behaviour change)
- Adaptation (to now inevitable climate change)

In this report we list a range of actions that will need to be taken to implement this approach and some extensions to State Strategic Plan targets.

The Round Table recommends that the State Strategic Plan be revised to include state-wide targets for healthy ecosystems and the sustainable use of resources, based on good science. These targets should be developed for the state’s agricultural, rangeland and marine ecosystems. They should also be reflected in individual industry plans. This report lists a range of steps which will need to be taken to meet these targets.

The Round Table recommends that the State Strategic Plan target concerning the reduction of the State’s total ecological footprint should specify a reduction of 20 per cent by 2020, and lists a number of steps that will need to be taken to meet this target.

Action 5. Stimulating Cultural and Behavioural Change.
In order to assist in making the State Strategic Plan more sustainable the Round Table recommends that the state government develop an integrated approach to engaging with the community about sustainability, including demonstrating leadership, raising the profile of sustainability, encouraging and supporting behaviour change, encouraging strategic alliances, and educating for sustainability.
Three Challenges for the Future

The Round Table has identified three key challenges to our sustainability, and believes that the State Strategic Plan must be measured against its capacity to respond to the risks and opportunities represented by these challenges. The Round Table wishes to draw attention to these challenges because it is firmly of the opinion that they must be acknowledged and taken seriously if the state is to be world-renowned and have a bright and sustainable future.

1. Climate change from the accelerating build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is the most substantial threat this century to our future. As policies to deal with this threat are put in place, South Australia needs to prepare for changes in the global economy that will challenge our industrial, commercial and domestic infrastructure, which depend on traditional energy sources. 

Climate change: it’s time to plan for change

2. South Australia’s unique natural heritage is under great threat. Our wildlife, our landscapes and our oceans all face very significant pressures that will be greatly exacerbated by climate change. The population and export targets contained in the State Strategic Plan will add to these pressures. Our society is dependent on functioning natural systems for air, water, arable land, material resources, tourism and a sense of place. However, current levels of investment will not be sufficient to stop a large decline in the health of our ecosystems.

Our natural systems need our serious attention

3. South Australia faces a number of absolute constraints, such as water, carbon emissions, and biodiversity. The absolute amount of these resources each of us uses must decrease dramatically if we are to meet the targets in the State Strategic Plan of increasing population and increasing prosperity, without compromising our long-term sustainability.

We must manage within ecological constraints

Four Principles

The State Strategic Plan is a sound basis for delivering a sustainable future for South Australia. However, uncertainty about the competing priority of goals will impede progress towards sustainability.

Certain truths have become obvious. We can’t keep taking non-renewable resources from the earth. We can’t keep making things that can’t be absorbed. Ecological deficit funding is not acceptable. We can’t leave environmental debts to future South Australians.

The Round Table recommends that in implementing the State Strategic Plan, government, business and the community should:

1. Recognise absolute ecological limits to development and keep economic activity within those limits.

An Environmental Limits Principle

2. Reflect the costs that economic activity and consumption impose on future South Australians.

A Polluter Pays Principle

3. Financially reward those acts that improve environmental outcomes and are part of the solution.

An Environmental Reward Principle

4. Remove all impediments and barriers to improvement of environmental outcomes.

A Positive Change Principle

All activity to implement the State Strategic Plan should be consistent with these principles.
“The metabolism of the global economy is on a collision course with the metabolism of the planet.”

Mike Rann, Premier of South Australia, 2004
Leadership for sustainability

SA Government processes should show leadership by demonstrating how sustainability can be an integral part of doing business.

The State Strategic Plan makes an unequivocal commitment to attainment of international status as a leader in the pursuit of environmental excellence.

The Round Table recommends that government processes show leadership in demonstrating how sustainability can become an integral part of doing business, including in the implementation of the State Strategic Plan.

If this recommendation is accepted, we would expect to see:

- Establishment of an organisational framework within government to ensure the application of sustainability principles in the implementation of the State Strategic Plan. Within this governance framework, there should be cabinet-level coordination of sustainability issues, including climate change, to provide the necessary leadership across government.

- Sustainability principles included in the operating charters of all government agencies and enterprises, and all government agencies and enterprises reporting annually to parliament on their implementation of those principles. We would also expect that Environmental Management Systems would be introduced into all government agencies and enterprises.

- Reform of the budget bidding process. Programs that run across agencies to achieve objectives in the State Strategic Plan should be encouraged by the establishment of a dedicated fund which groups of agencies are able to bid for and funding for sustainability projects should be provided over several years.

- Progress in the development of environmental accounts for the state. For example, progress in the assessment of the costs of climate change, the value of marine and terrestrial ecosystem services to the state, and the costs associated with the use of South Australia’s natural resources.

- Building on the Greening of Government Operations framework, the government’s own operations demonstrating tangible sustainability leadership. For example, Fleet SA to be set fleet emission reduction targets and funded to encourage adoption of appropriate technologies. Hybrid vehicles to comprise 1% of the fleet in 2005, 2% in 2006, 3% 2007 and an additional 2% per year thereafter. This target to apply to each agency fleet.
Energy and climate change

South Australia should reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and begin preparing its economy and society for climate change and a carbon constrained world.

The emerging carbon-constrained global economy will challenge us all to create great opportunities for innovation. There is increasing acceptance that humankind must halve global carbon emissions by 2050 to avoid catastrophic climate change costs this century.

While the energy and emission targets in the State Strategic Plan provide a good start, they are not enough if we aim to be ‘world renowned for being clean, green and sustainable’ in that carbon-constrained world.

A Strategic Plan for the coming decade needs to look beyond the Kyoto emissions target. Given the deep cuts in greenhouse emissions needed by 2050, a leading state should aim for a 20% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2020. And to be ‘world renowned’, we need to lead in achieving more economic output and a better quality of life while using less energy and dramatically cutting emissions. That means leading Australia in business initiatives and community practices to reduce energy demand through widely applying low emission technologies, efficiency and behavioural change programs.

The Round Table recommends that the government deliver a true Triple A Energy Rating for South Australia through actions addressing:

Abatement (of greenhouse gases)
Awareness (to drive behaviour change)
Adaptation (to inevitable climate change)

To act on this Triple A approach, many measures will need to be taken. For example, the government will need to:

Abatement

>> Set a binding cap on state greenhouse emissions and specific targets for future reductions. The State Strategic Plan, when updated, should set targets for a 20% emissions reduction by 2020 and for the state to be in the top quartile (ie lowest emissions) performer in terms of emissions per unit of state GEP compared with other developed economies globally by 2015.

>> Take a leadership role in establishing a national uniform greenhouse emissions trading scheme with all other states (and ultimately the Commonwealth), designed for a seamless trading interface with major schemes now being implemented overseas under Kyoto such as in the European Union.

Awareness

>> Provide incentives for the community and industry to embrace and champion demand and efficiency measures to achieve declines in peak (summer) energy demand. This should commence in 2010 so that the increase in urbanisation associated with the State Strategic Plan targeted population increase comes with a similar percentage reduction in peak electricity demand.

Adaptation

>> Work with the CSIRO over the long term on the likely impacts of climate change on South Australia, to develop adaptation measures and opportunities for innovation.

In the future there will be a need to adapt not only to the modifications to our lifestyles brought about by changes in climate but also to new ways of supplying and pricing energy, doing business, urban planning and building homes.
Managing natural systems

South Australia should take serious action to halt the loss of its natural systems, including setting formal state-wide targets for healthy ecosystems.

South Australia has an opportunity to promote itself internationally by substantiating and maintaining a clean, green image. Recognition for being clean and green can assist our tourism, food, wine and manufactured products sectors. However, if we are to be ‘world renowned for being clean, green and sustainable’, in the context of the extinction crisis described above, we will need to make a much greater effort towards maintaining and improving the health of our natural systems.

The State Strategic Plan needs to focus on what healthy ecosystems would look like in South Australia, and set state-wide targets to achieve them, focusing, for example, on indicators for healthy soil, water and biodiversity.

If we fail to set these targets and achieve them, our grandchildren will face a very different natural world to the one we know now.

The Round Table recommends that the State Strategic Plan be revised to include state-wide targets for healthy ecosystems and the sustainable use of resources, based on good science. These targets should be developed for the state’s agricultural, rangeland and marine ecosystems. They should also be reflected in individual industry plans.

There are many steps that will need to be taken to meet such targets. These steps will be spelt out in more detail in the report of the Ecosystem Management Committee of the Round Table to be released shortly. They include:

- Substantially increasing the amount invested in the protection and sustainable management of the state’s ecosystems.
- Making resource decisions based on environmental capability assessments.
- Developing and using a comprehensive list of market-based instruments which can assist in protecting and sustainably managing the state’s ecosystems.
- Improving the state’s terrestrial and marine threatened species laws to reflect national best practice.
- Developing a ‘whole of ecosystem’ research framework to identify and prioritise research gaps.
- Addressing the likely impacts of climate change on the state’s ecosystems and primary production sectors.

3. Advice from Stephen Fishes, Director, Science and Conservation, Department for Environment and Heritage, to the Ecosystem Management Committee of the Premier’s Round Table on Sustainability.
Successful settlements of the future will not be dominated by cars. They will allow for growth within defined boundaries that do not encroach on sensitive natural environments or productive agricultural land. They will be liveable and people-centred, and have a low impact on the environment.

To achieve the State Strategic Plan goals for a total South Australian population of 2 million, coupled with world-renowned environmental status for the state, our settlements will need to have a reduced impact on the environment: absolutely and per capita.

The Round Table recommends that the State Strategic Plan target concerning the reduction of SA’s total ecological footprint should specify a reduction of 20 per cent by 2020.

There are many steps that will need to be taken to meet this target. For example:

**Built Environment**

- An Infrastructure Plan that works within the ecological principles articulated in this report and plans for climate change: adaptation measures will include a more robust storm water system, better urban flood management, and dwelling designs to manage more hot days using less power.

- Amendment of the planning system and development assessment process so that it operates within ecological constraints.

- The introduction of a comprehensive building rating system. This should include:
  - A mechanism enabling all households to assess the environmental impact of their house and a requirement for disclosure at point of sale.
  - For new houses, limits on greenhouse emissions, energy and water per household — similar to the BASIX system in New South Wales.
  - A requirement for all commercial and public buildings (including hospitals, prisons and schools) to be rated.
  - Incentives for households that have a minimal negative environmental impact.

**Utilities: Essential Services, Precious Resources**

- Investigation of a pricing structure for electricity and water that:
  - allows for essential access
  - introduces real (including environmental) cost recovery
  - recognises the community cost of supply required to support home air conditioning, and
  - recognises the community benefit of distributed electricity generation to the grid through technology such as photo-voltaic cells.

- A requirement for air conditioners to be sold with meters that will allow interval metering.

- The installation of simple real-time electricity user-feedback devices in all economically disadvantaged housing.

**Transport**

- Provision of public transport systems with extensive use of low emissions fuels (such as natural gas and biodiesel).

Encouragement of the behavioural change required to ensure greatly increased use of public transport systems through revenue neutral incentive structures which reward use of public versus private transport.

- Incentives for low-emitting, fuel efficient private vehicles such as priority access to bus lanes and other fast transit corridors for low weight vehicles, ultra-low emitters or vehicles carrying multiple passengers.

- Development of an integrated planning strategy and transport plan that recognises the negative impact of roads and freeways on community development and the importance of liveable and walkable neighbourhoods.

South Australia should take steps to reduce its ecological footprint by 20 per cent by 2020.
Stimulating behavioural and cultural change

The SA Government should develop a community engagement strategy that supports and rewards those who pursue sustainability.

The sustainability targets and actions in the State Strategic Plan require meaningful engagement with the community – industry, local government, civil society and individual South Australians.

In order to assist in making the State Strategic Plan more sustainable, the Round Table recommends that the government develop an integrated approach to engaging with the community about sustainability. This should include demonstrating leadership, raising the profile of sustainability, encouraging and supporting behaviour change, encouraging strategic alliances, and educating for sustainability.

Encouraging change in the way South Australians impact on the environment and achieving the specific targets set down for community change in other sections of this report should be achieved by measures such as:

Leadership
- Opinion leaders in the SA community acting as spokespeople and champions for sustainability and modelling appropriate sustainability behaviours.

Raising the profile of sustainability
- Capturing attention about sustainability issues by providing community information resources that are vivid, concrete and personalised.
- Clearly communicating the sustainability targets for the SA community to reach (for example in public transport use) indicating the losses that will occur as a result of inaction, and the benefits and opportunities obtained by acting.
- Cultivating and adequately resourcing a large group of community volunteers to provide information through educational outreach and to actively champion and model sustainability in their own communities.

Providing and extending demonstration projects (such as the Solar School Program) that model sustainability and provide a community education function.

Encouraging and supporting behaviour change
- Implementing feedback mechanisms for consumers, to provide reinforcement about the impact of their personal implementation of sustainable practices (such as suggested elsewhere in this report on dollars saved as a result of their reduction in energy consumption and smart meters for air conditioners).
- Providing incentives (such as those suggested elsewhere in this report in terms of public transport, private vehicles and energy use) to provide the motivation for individuals to change their behaviour.
- Identifying and removing barriers to sustainable behaviour that make it inconvenient, unpleasant, costly or time consuming (for example, by increasing the efficiency, cleanliness and safety of public transport).

Encouraging strategic alliances
- Facilitating communication and cooperation between non-government community groups, industry and all spheres of government about the application of sustainability principles.

Educating for sustainability
- Developing policy for the integration of sustainability principles into education across all sectors (schools, universities, and TAFE colleges) and across all areas of the curriculum and all courses of study so that environmentally responsible decisions and actions become an integrated part of the everyday lives of future generations of South Australians.
Future Round Table Activity

The Round Table proposes to engage with the Economic Development Board and the Social Inclusion Board and with the broader community on the issues described in this report, and will work with government on implementation of our recommendations.

Our aim is to assist the state to develop a framework to enable South Australia to move to a more sustainable footing.

Membership of the Premier’s Round Table on Sustainability

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Three Challenges for the Future

The Round Table has identified three key challenges to sustainability, and believes that the State Strategic Plan should be measured against its capacity to respond to these challenges. The Round Table wishes to draw attention to these challenges, and it is firmly of the opinion that they must be addressed, and taken seriously if the state is to be world class and have a bright and sustainable future.

1. Climate change: from the accelerating build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere it is clear that it is a substantial threat this century to our future ability to deal with this threat. It is time to plan for changes in the global climate, and the state will challenge our industrial, commercial, and infrastructure, which depend on traditional fuel intensive activities, to meet the needs of a changing future.

Climate change: it’s time to plan for it.

Four Principles

The State Strategic Plan is a sound basis for a sustainable future for South Australia. However, about the competing priority of goals will impel us towards sustainability.

Certain truths have become obvious. We can’t use non-renewable resources from the earth. We can’t make things that can’t be absorbed. Ecological funding is not acceptable; we mustn’t leave economic debts to future South Australians.
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