

Sustainability Learning Guide: What councillors can do to influence sustainability?

About this guide

This guide has been developed to assist councillors on the journey towards sustainability. This journey can be defined as a process for providing the awareness, knowledge, skills, and values to help all current and future generations achieve good health, economic security, social equity and stability while restoring and sustaining the earth's life support systems. The information collected in this guide has come from practitioners who have shared their initiatives. For more information visit www.lgsa.org.au and look under "ESD".

Note: there are 152 local governments in NSW with 152 ways that council officers and elected representatives work together. When working with council staff it is important to be aware of the code of conduct governing the relationships between councillors and council staff. It is important to value and support your sustainability staff. If in doubt check with your General Manager or the Department of Local Government Model Code of Conduct (www.dlg.nsw.gov.au).

Are you a sustainability champion for your council?

Councillors can know a lot

- Come to an understanding of what sustainability means to you and your council
- Know Council's Community Strategic Plan and how it promotes the integration of economic, social, environmental and governance (Quadruple Bottom Line)
- Know the relevant legislation and how to comply with it, give due diligence to ESD
- Have a view on: 'How sustainable Council is'
- Base decisions on social, environmental, governance and financial considerations
- Strive to be visionary leaders of sustainability in the community

Councillors can do a lot

- Ensure all Council staff have an understanding of sustainability
- Ensure that corporate responsibility is taken. Push Council to be a global citizen
- Encourage Council to complete a sustainability review like the LGMA Sustainability Health Check (www.lgmansw.com.au)
- Review the following processes to check they are sustainable:
 - ☑ Review strategic direction
 - ☑ Review Delivery Program and Operational Plan
 - ☑ Review council policy statements
 - ☑ Review council guidelines that support policies
 - ☑ Review council LEP and DCP's
 - ☑ Review standard conditions of consent

- Review council incentive programs
- Review council community engagement programs
- Review council partnerships
- Review what other councils are doing

Councillors can find out a lot. In terms of sustainability:

- Find out what the community wants
- Find out about innovative approaches
- Look out for sustainability policies and guidelines from other organisations e.g. LGSA NRM corporate and land use planning guidelines (<http://www.lgsa.org.au/policy/natural-resource-management>).

Know that it is a journey.....

How do we know where the journey ends? Each council has taken a different road; and it is important to celebrate the small steps that your council undertakes on the sustainability journey.

What have you done?

You may have a great sustainability motion and report that could be shared with other councils. Contact the Sustainability team to share your journey (sustainability@lgsa.org.au).

Training and Resources

The LGSA has an extensive program for councillor training including a “Understanding Sustainability for Councillors” module. This can be tailored to specific council needs. Contact LGSA Learning Solutions for more information (<http://www.lgsa.org.au/member-services/learning-solutions>).

For other Sustainability resources, including stories from councils, visit www.lgsa.org.au and look under “ESD”. Relevant publications for councillors interested in sustainability include:

- The DLG Councillor Guide 2008 (appendix 5 Sustainability)
<http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/Information/CouncillorGuide.pdf>
- The Guide to Good Governance and ESD for Local Councillors 2008 (for Hunter Councils)
- LGSA DVD 'Local Government, the Key to Sustainability' 2004 contact LGSA

The Sustainability team is interested to know of other ways to assist councillors on the sustainability journey, so please contact us on sustainability@lgsa.org.au so we can update this guide.

For assistance with your council's sustainability learning journey contact the Sustainability team sustainability@lgsa.org.au or phone 02 9242 4000.



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