



## Keynote Address: The Sustainability Assessment Agenda

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Celebrate Sustainable September!



What is sustainability assessment?

*A process that directs decision-making towards sustainability*

- Hacking, T and P Guthrie 2008 A Framework for Clarifying the Meaning of the Triple Bottom-Line, Integrated, and Sustainability Assessment. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 28: 73-89



5 Steps  
for sustainability planning

1. Identify the goal and the related question to be addressed
2. Define the sustainability decision criteria
3. Identify alternatives and options to meet the goal
4. Assess the sustainability impacts of each alternative
5. Select and enhance the preferred alternative

Pope, J (2007) *Facing the Gorgon: Sustainability Assessment and Policy Learning in Western Australia*. PhD Thesis, Murdoch University, <http://www.lib.murdoch.edu.au/adt/browse/view/adt-MU20070330.154243>



## Framing the question: A simple example

The problem:

***A major arterial road is severely congested***



The desired outcome:

***A wider road***

The sustainability assessment question:

***What is the most sustainable way to widen the road?***



## Following this through...

### Step 2: Sustainability decision criteria

Consider issues such as:

- Clearing of vegetation
- Proximity to houses and other buildings
- Cost

### Step 3: Identify alternatives & options

Might include:

- Widening different sections
- Widening by removing median strips vs. purchasing adjacent land
- Widening it all now vs. a staggered approach



## Can we frame the issue more strategically?

The problem:

***A major arterial road is severely congested***



The desired outcome:

***A less congested road***

The sustainability assessment question:

***What is the most sustainable way to reduce congestion?***



## Then...

### Step 2: Sustainability decision criteria

Consider issues such as:

- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Travel time
- Cost



### Step 3: Identify alternatives & options

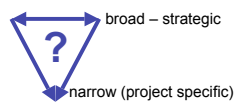
Might include:

- Enhancing public transport
- Designating a car-pooling lane
- Introducing a congestion charge
- Widening the road



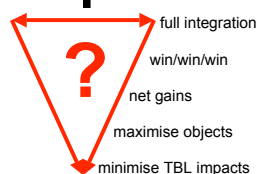
How does the framing question relate to sustainable outcomes?

***Decision question being asked (nature of proposal)***



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***Sustainability outcomes sought***



Morrison-Saunders, A. and R. Therivel (2006) Sustainability Integration and Assessment, *Journal of Environmental Assessment, Policy and Management*, 8(3): 281-298



## Spectrum of framing questions

most strategic



most project specific and site specific

What is the vision for a sustainable future for area Z?
What is the most sustainable way to manage resource W?
What is the best way to address issue/problem Y?
What is the most sustainable location for project X?
How can proposal X be made more sustainable?
Is proposal X acceptably sustainable?

Adapted from: Morrison-Saunders & Therivel (2006)



## The Northern Development Taskforce

- An ground-breaking example of strategic sustainability planning and assessment
- Framing question:

***What is the most sustainable location for an LNG processing hub in the Kimberley?***

[www.doir.wa.gov.au](http://www.doir.wa.gov.au)



## The Symposium Programme

Provides an opportunity to:

- Hear from leading practitioners
- Learn about tools and techniques
- Share experiences



## Why we are here!

To progress sustainability assessment practice and work together towards a more sustainable Western Australia

