

# AGENDA 21 FACTS & QUOTES

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## Why did successive governments send expensive implementation reports to the UN to prove they are implementing AG21 when the politicians tell the public they are not implementing it?

The United Nations further confirms the connection between Australia's ESD strategy and Agenda 21 with their AG21 implementation and national monitoring reports ([70](#), [71](#), [72](#), [73](#), [74](#), [75](#), [76](#), [77](#), [78](#), [79](#), [80](#)).

But although all 3 levels of government in Australia were required to utilise vast resources to compile AG21 compliance reports in an attempt to satisfy the UN, this fact was consistently omitted from political policies and election campaigns as the voters were kept very much in the dark. In fact regular reports to the UN [required input from the following Ministers and their departments](#):

### **2a. List of ministries and agencies involved:**

*Australian Government Departments: Prime Minister and Cabinet; Environment, Sport and Territories; Foreign Affairs and Trade; Primary Industries and Energy.*

*State Government Departments: Premier's, New South Wales; Premier & Cabinet, Victoria; Office of the Cabinet, Queensland; Premier & Cabinet, Western Australia; Premier and Cabinet, South Australia; Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania; Chief Minister's, Northern Territory; Environment, Land and Planning, Australian Capital Territory. Australian Local Government Association."*

### **"Key National Sustainable Development Coordination Mechanism(s)/Council(s).**

#### **[Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development \(ICESD\)](#)**

*ICESD is the peak, officials-level, forum for coordination of ecologically sustainable development related strategies and policies which effect Federal, State and Territory, and local government jurisdictions. The committee reports to the Council of Australian Governments. Implementation of strategies and policies is carried out by the relevant agency/jurisdiction.*

Unbeknown to most Australians, the Australian government supported the UN in establishing the [CSD](#) to monitor Australia's implementation of AG21 and in fact, [Australia proudly claims to have been a member of the CSD since its inception](#):

*"Australia supported the establishment of the UNCSD and has been a member of the commission since its inception. Australia's commitment to the principles of Agenda 21 are also reflected in the appointment of an Ambassador for the Environment. Australia has consistently supported an expanded role for NGO participation throughout the UNCED process. This commitment has been reinforced by having NGO representatives on Australian delegations to all sessions of the CSD. Australia funds key international institutions involved in promoting multilateral solutions to environmental problems. Among these organisations are United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), United Nations Education and Scientific Cooperation Organisation (UNESCO), Food and Agriculture*

*Organisation (FAO), and the twenty-two international agricultural research centres, including the sixteen centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research.*

*Since 1992, Australia has undertaken a range of substantial measures to integrate and promote the principles of sustainable development throughout the development cooperation program. The policy basis for the development program is contained in the document 'Towards a Sustainable Future'. This policy focuses on the key themes contained in Agenda 21, namely; the economic and social dimensions of development, the conservation and management of resources for development, and strengthening the role of major groups. In particular the policy basis is targeted towards sustainable development priorities in the Asia-Pacific region. The environmental expenditure component of Australia's aid program increased from A\$ 120 million in 1992 to over A\$ 160 million in 1995."*

But while the Australian government wanted the [UNCSD](#) to oversee Australia's compliance with AG21, they neglected to inform Australian voters that [CSD](#) decisions would be made by member states which, from time to time, included countries like [Zimbabwe, Ghana, Iran, and Bolivia](#). Apparently the Australian government valued their judgement more than they did the judgement of Australian voters. Nevertheless, [successive Australian governments pledged their undying allegiance the UNCSD process](#):

*"Australia has the following objectives concerning United Nations institutional arrangements dealing with sustainable development: to ensure proposals related to the United Nations system are developed within existing resources; to encourage an open and transparent system of national review by the commission, as well as regular preparation of national sustainable development reports; to expand the role of NGOs in the UNCED follow-up process; to clarify the role of the United Nations system, particularly the UNCSD, in implementing the outcomes of UNCED and to ensure that clear links are established between the commission and other United Nation bodies.....Australia has consistently supported an expanded role for NGO participation throughout the UNCED process. This commitment has been reinforced by having NGO representatives on Australian delegations to all three sessions of the CSD.....Australia has international environmental reporting responsibilities to a number of international forums. These include: the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) Group on the State of the Environment; the OECD Group on Environmental Performance; UNEP; the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific; and the WMO. In addition, Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 calls for voluntary national reports on the implementation of Agenda 21. Australia has provided national reports to the CSD since 1994 and has encouraged the evolution of a culture of voluntary reporting addressing the work program of the commission.....Most State and Territory governments have now developed state of the environment reporting programs in response to Agenda 21 and through specific legislation. Local Governments are also beginning to assume environment reporting responsibilities."*

## **Why did Senator Macdonald confirm Commonwealth funding of AG21 when Greg Hunt Says Ag21 is Not Being Implemented?**

And in the [February 2000 edition of Local Government Focus Magazine](#), [Australia's online local government newspaper](#), Senator Macdonald emphasised that the Commonwealth was driving the implementation of LA21 at the local council level by providing funds:

*"Senator Ian Macdonald, Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government announced \$100,000 in Federal funding to boost the activities of Local Agenda 21, a programme for sustainable development established by and for Local Government....."Local Government spends over \$3 billion each year on environmental protection and resource management. This places Local Government at the forefront of implementation of environmental initiatives like Local Agenda 21.....Local Agenda 21 had become the focus for translating Ecologically Sustainable Development*

(ESD) into action at the local level. Senator Hill, the Minister for Environment and Heritage has recently launched *Our Community, Our Future: A Guide to Local Agenda 21*. "The new manual will assist Local Government and local communities to forge and build local partnerships for sustainability," Senator Macdonald said. "It will draw on and incorporate the wealth of experience in developing and implementing Local Agenda 21 which has taken place around Australia and throughout the world since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit."

The manual will provide a series of practical steps for those Councils who do wish to implement and become involved in and undertake a Local Agenda 21.

The funds, provided from the Local Government Incentive Programme, will be used for promotion, education and training for Local Government, to support and encourage the adoption of Local Agenda 21 plans in the achievement of long-term sustainability."

## **Why did David Kemp announce over 25% of councils have implemented AG21**

In the [May 2003 edition of Local Government Focus](#). David Kemp again reiterated his satisfaction with the implementation of Agenda 21:

*"Federal Minister for the Environment, Dr David Kemp, reaffirmed the key role that Local Government plays in our quest for sustainability. 'Over a quarter of Australia's 700 Councils now have Local Agenda 21 plans in place,' the Minister said*

## **Defence force implements AG21**

The Australian government's "[Defence Ecologically Sustainable Development Strategy](#)" further underlines the fact that [Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development](#) is in reality, simply a renamed rebadged version of the United Nations Agenda 21 program:

*"This strategy is a high level overarching guide to the integration of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles within Defence such as resource use, environment and heritage management, development of capability, procurement practices, infrastructure development, the operation of Defence Training Areas, and Defence contribution to community well-being.....The United Nations 1992 environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro developed Agenda 21, which sets out a blueprint for sustainable activity across all areas of human activity. The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSES) to illustrate Australia's commitment to ESD, and implementation of Agenda 21. The NSES has become the benchmark for ESD in Australia.....The NSES defines ESD as:*

*'...using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that the ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased'.....Sound environmental management practices are in place to equip Defence personnel to understand and behave in accordance with environmental legislation and its obligations.....In the United States some land has been removed from the Defence Forces' stewardship, due to failure to appreciate the need for robust environmental management."*

## **Prime Minister Paul Keating Says Australia Proud to Conform to UN AG21 Requirements, although the people were given no democratic choice**

In the [Foreword to Australia's report to the UNCSO in 1995](#), then Prime Minister Paul Keating reinforced again how diligently Australia is complying with the UN's Agenda 21 implementation requirements:

*“As the pressures on world resources continue to grow, the concept of Sustainable Development becomes an imperative for the global community. Australia is proud to present its second report to the Commission on Sustainable Development. This details our nation's efforts toward implementing Agenda 21 through the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development..... In this National Report, Australia sets out its experience in natural resource and environmental management. The report should not be seen just as a scorecard of our activities relevant to Agenda 21. With it, Australia shares its experiences with the world in the belief that others can build on our successes and learn from our mistakes.”*

Although Keating claimed *“Australia is proud to present its second report to the Commission on Sustainable Development”*, most Australians had never heard of the Commission for Sustainable Development, let alone be proud we were sending regular compliance reports to them.

## **Commonwealth embeds sustainability officers in Councils around Australia to implement Agenda 21 though Greg Hunt says Commonwealth has no influence over Councils**

In 2002, 10 years after introduction of AG21, the Commonwealth government [proudly announced](#), in [the WSSD Assessment Report](#), that *“it is impossible to document all of the initiatives which Australia has put in place to turn the principles to which we agreed into action”* since the 1992 Rio summit. Given the multitude of pervasive across the board regulations the government had introduced it is hardly surprising that they found the changes *“impossible to document”*. But the Commonwealth, unbeknown to most taxpayers and ratepayers, [was also working with local councils to make sure no one escaped the demands of the UN:](#)

*“The Federal Government is also working in partnership with local government through its Environmental Resource Officer and Local Agenda 21 programs to promote sustainable development at the local government level.*

### **Box 7: Federal-Local Government Partnerships**

*With funding provided by the federal government, the **Environmental Resource Officer Scheme** places dedicated officers in the peak local government associations in each State and the Australian Local Government Association, to assist councils to better manage their local environments, especially through improved take-up of Federal programs.*

*The **Local Agenda 21 program** assists local governments to apply the framework from Agenda 21 for local government in order to integrate environmental, economic and social objectives. Elements of the Local Agenda 21 Program include: a National Local Leaders in Sustainability Forum, corresponding State and Territory fora, pilot projects to test regional approaches to sustainable development and to develop appropriate models for the implementation of Local Agenda 21 on a regional basis, a Local Agenda 21 Award, and a national Local Agenda 21 Conference. The Federal Government is also developing a national framework of milestones for adoption and use of Local Agenda 21 by local government.”*

## **The Judiciary admit implementing provisions of AG21**

While AG21 and reporting agreements are not mandatory until enforced by international law or backed by Australian legislation, the legislators have been busy rewriting the legal system as is made

clear by Justice Brian Preston, the Chief Judge of the Land and Environment Court of NSW in his paper on the "[Judicial Implementation of the Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development in Australia and Asia](#)". The fact that these reporting requirements have filtered through to local councils is confirmed by [Baw Baw Council](#) in Appendix 2 of their [Climate Change Strategy](#), which notes that their Local Agenda 21 initiatives are monitored by the [United Nations CSD](#).

Justice Preston notes the vital importance of [the IGAE](#) and the [National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development](#) (*National ESD Strategy*) for the implementation of AG21/ESD in Australia.:

*"The international instruments signed at UNCED by attending countries, including Australia were:*

- *The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;*
- *Agenda 21;*
- *The Convention on Biological Diversity;*
- *The Framework Convention on Climate Change; and*
- *The Statement of Forest Principles.*

*The documents enunciate the concept of ecologically sustainable development and recommend a programme of action for the implementation of the concept at international, national and local levels.....*

*In partial fulfilment of its promise entered into upon signing the various instruments at UNCED, Australia finalised the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (National ESD Strategy). The National ESD Strategy was launched in December 1992 and has been adopted by the Commonwealth and each of the States and Territories in Australia. The National ESD Strategy is a form of intergovernmental agreement which records the public policy commitment of each of the governments and their agencies to implement the measures agreed to in the Strategy. It includes as appendices a summary of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and a guide to Agenda 21. In a sense, there has been an incorporation of these national and international instruments as policies of each of the governments of the Commonwealth, and the States and Territories."*

According to Chris McGrath in "[Synopsis of the Queensland Environmental Legal System](#)":

*"International considerations may also influence the Queensland environmental legal system through international debate and policy documents (sometimes called "soft law") such as Agenda 21 and The Earth Charter forming the basis for government policy..... The Queensland Parliament has enacted over 30 pieces of legislation that directly regulate activities impacting on the environment..... The Sustainable Planning Act 2009 (Qld) (SPA) recently replaced the Integrated Planning Act 1997 (Qld) (IPA) as Queensland's principal planning legislation..... SPA is a complex piece of legislation but a conceptual structure of it is shown in Figure 4. Its overarching purpose is "ecological sustainability"*

[Justice Preston details the history of sustainable development and Agenda 21](#), which was agreed to at the [United Nations Conference on Environment and Development \(UNCED\)](#) in 1992, and their inclusion in Australian laws through two guiding documents developed by the Australian government, the [Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment](#), and the [National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development](#).

*"Agenda 21, a programme of action for sustainable development worldwide, was adopted unanimously at UNCED. Together with the Rio Declaration, and the Statement of Forest Principles, they fulfil the mandate given to UNCED by the United Nations General Assembly when, in 1989, it called for a global meeting 'to devise integrated strategies that would halt and reverse the negative*

*impact of human behaviours on the physical environment and promote environmentally sustainable economic development in all countries'.....*

*In partial fulfilment of its promise entered into upon signing the various instruments at **UNCED**, Australia finalised the **National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (National ESD Strategy)**. The **National ESD Strategy** was launched in December 1992 and has been adopted by the Commonwealth and each of the States and Territories in Australia. The **National ESD Strategy** is a form of intergovernmental agreement which records the public policy commitment of each of the governments and their agencies to implement the measures agreed to in the Strategy. It includes as appendices a summary of the **Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment**, the **Rio Declaration on Environment and Development** and a guide to **Agenda 21.52** In a sense, there has been an incorporation of these national and international instruments as policies of each of the governments of the Commonwealth, and the States and Territories."*

## **Implemented at a bureaucratic level**

[As the Commonwealth government notes in their WSSD Assessment Report](#), sustainability programs were largely implemented at a bureaucratic level, beyond democratic scrutiny, and the whole program was monitored by, and driven by, the UN Commission for Sustainable Development and the OECD:

*"Initially, implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, and the National Greenhouse Response Strategy were overseen by an intergovernmental committee of officials reporting to the Council of Australian Governments. This arrangement operated between 1994 and 1997 at which time that responsibility was assumed by Ministerial Councils. The Ministerial Councils comprise Ministers responsible for similar portfolios in all Australian jurisdictions, for example the (then) Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council and the Agricultural and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand.....In meeting our international reporting obligations (see below on reporting to the Commission for Sustainable Development, and to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)"*

## **Climate change just one part of Agenda 21**

[Gwydir Council admitted during their Committee Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2013](#), that Agenda 21 had "encouraged conspiracy theories about the real agenda." But the Council pointed out that Agenda 21 had, "for 21 years, been very influential in developing public policies that directly impact upon every level of government", including regulations pertaining to ecologically sustainable development. [As the Council pointed out:](#)

*"Many of the subsequent matters introduced to encourage a sustainable society, such as the carbon tax, are the outcome of the Australian Government's attempt to introduce the objectives of Agenda 21."*

## **More facts and quotes**

In 2004 the ALP remained determined to obey the UN directive to force all Australians to comply with the requirements of Agenda 21 under Clauses 77 and 78 of Chapter 15, [Australia's Place in the World, of the 2004 ALP National Platform & Constitution](#). This was confirmed again in the ALP **Environmental Diplomacy** policy detailed in Clause 105-06 of the [2007 ALP National Platform](#). And\_In

1998, then Premier of NSW Mr Bob Carr proudly announced in the "[Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in New South Wales](#)", that NSW policies were firmly based upon international agreements such as Agenda 21 which had been incorporated into NSW legislation over the previous five years.

The [Australian Local Government Association](#) (ALGA), which has [increasingly close links with the Commonwealth Government](#) and is a [member of COAG](#), was one of the original signatories to the [the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment](#) in 1992. In 2002 the [Australian Local Government Association](#) reaffirmed their commitment to Agenda 21 in the [Sustaining Our Communities Declaration](#):

*"There remains a pressing need for further action at all levels to be accelerated if the global sustainable development objectives of Agenda 21 are to be realised. The Newcastle Declaration is acknowledged as a starting point. It is **time to move from commitment to action**..... Continuing the implementation of Agenda 21 in our Local Governments and their communities.....Continuing the implementation of Agenda 21 by **establishing partnerships with non-government organisations, business and finance, and education and research institutions**....Continuing the implementation of Agenda 21 by **working as a partner with national, state and territory governments***

In Victoria, the [Municipal Association of Victoria \(MAV\)](#) "*established a statewide partnership of councils involved in ecological sustainable development (ESD) /Triple Bottom Line/Local Agenda 21(LA21) initiatives. A successful first meeting of 17 member councils from around the State was held on 15th August 2001 to establish the MAV Victorian Local Sustainability Partnership.*" And "[By 2001, at least 20 local councils in Victoria](#) *"were working towards implementing Local Agenda 21 action plans to help their communities become involved in sustainable development."*

**According to a [media release by Senator the Hon Robert Hill](#), the Leader of the Howard Government in the Senate, and Minister for the Environment and Heritage, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2001:**

*"ADELAIDE TO HOST INTERNATIONAL LOCAL AGENDA 21 CONFERENCE - Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill today announced Adelaide will host an international conference on sustainable development for local authorities in March 2002.....There is currently LA21 activity in every State and Territory in Australia. A recent survey by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives Australia/New Zealand identified 97 Councils in Australia which are engaged in LA21 programs....."In South Australia over 50 per cent of Councils are undertaking an LA21 program with their communities," Senator Hill said.....City of Adelaide Lord Mayor, Alfred Huang, welcomed the selection of Adelaide as host city and said the State has shown an ongoing commitment to LA21....."South Australia's State and Local governments have had a long-term and ongoing commitment to promoting and supporting the uptake of LA21 through the Partnership for Local Agenda 21," Lord Mayor Huang said....."*

Former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment in the Howard government, **Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald**, in a public symposium forum in Brisbane on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1998 organised by Logan United Citizens Association and Concerned Residents Action Group, and entitled "**Ecological Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21**", [outlined the influence of the Commonwealth upon implementation of AG21](#) at the local level and the [funding provided by the Commonwealth](#):

*"The concept of sustainable development has been with us now since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and action has been guided at the international level by Local Agenda 21. At the national level,*

action has been guided by the 1992 National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, endorsed by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments as well as the Australian Local Government Association..... Commonwealth policies are a catalyst for the development of these dynamic partnerships. The Commonwealth has several initiatives designed to support and provide a catalyst for the development of Local Agenda 21 in Australia....The Environment Resource Officer (ERO) Scheme is operated by the Department of Environment to work in partnership with Local Government. The Scheme funds part of the cost of a dedicated environment officer in a peak Local Government organisation in each State to work with Councils to maximise positive environmental outcomes....Last year we also funded a National Environment Resource Officer to be based in Environs Australia...This ERO scheme is one of the main ways the Commonwealth communicates with and provides information on Commonwealth environmental policies and programmes to Local Government....The Commonwealth has recently changed the work plans of the Environment Resource Officer in response to this upsurge in interest following the Newcastle conference. Promoting and assisting councils to develop and implement Local Agenda 21 is a significant part of the Environment Resource Officer's work plans for the current financial year...In addition, a major task of the National Environment Resource Officer is to provide advice on national themes and options for promoting Local Agenda 21 to councils. This includes developing implementation strategies.....**To add impetus to Local Agenda 21 the Commonwealth has recently commissioned the development of a new how-to-do it manual for Local Councils which is due for release mid year.** This manual will go about assisting Local Government and local communities to forge and build local partnerships for sustainability.....The manual will draw on and incorporate the wealth of experience in developing and implementing Local Agenda 21 which has taken place around Australia and throughout the world since the 1992 Earth Summit....The manual will provide a series of practical steps for those Councils who do wish to implement and become involved in and undertake a Local Agenda 21."

Senator Ian Macdonald's concerns about Australia's slow adoption of AG21 go back to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1994 [when he asked in Parliament](#):

*"I understand that Australia has been criticised for lagging behind in its efforts to meet its goals under the agenda 21 program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Do you agree that Australia is lagging behind?"*

Of course sustainable development strategies such as Agenda 21 are seen by some as [the key to climate change](#).

In 1999, Senator Robert Hill and Senator Ian MacDonald in the Howard government, officially launched the [Commonwealth government's Agenda 21 instruction manual](#) for local councils, as recorded by the [May 2000 edition](#) of [Local Government Focus](#):

*"In November 1999, Senator Hill, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, launched Our Community Our Future: A Guide to Local Agenda 21, which is an important resource to assist Councils in implementing Local Agenda 21. The launch was held at a reception at Parliament House and coincided with the National General Assembly of the Australian Local Government Association. Over 60 elected members and senior managers attended the reception to launch Our Community Our Future, demonstrating the increasing interest in Local Agenda 21."*

In 1997 [Greens MP Ian Cohen outlined the basis of the legal force behind Agenda 21](#) at that time:

*"Agenda 21, a program of action for sustainable development worldwide,..... Agenda 21 stands as a comprehensive blueprint for action to be taken globally from now into the twenty-first century by governments, United Nations organisations, development agencies, non-governmental organisations,*



*and independent sector groups in every area where human activity impacts on the environment..... While the agreements lack the force of international law, the adoption of the texts carries with it a strong moral obligation to ensure their full implementation. Therefore, it can be argued that Australia, and hence New South Wales, is under a strong moral obligation to ensure their full implementation. In fact, some of the obligations set out in Agenda 21 and the Rio declaration have found their way into national law; namely, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment, which is annexed to the National Environment Protection Council (New South Wales) Act 1995.....The National Environment Protection Council (New South Wales) Act 1995 annexes the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment. On 1 May 1992 an agreement was made between the Commonwealth, the States - including New South Wales - the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and the Australian Local Government Association; that is, the parties to the agreement. The agreement sets out the responsibilities of the parties in relation to the environment and they agreed to take steps to fulfill their responsibilities.”*

**Agenda 21 is even being used by the education department to educate our children ([214](#), [215](#), [216](#), [217](#), [218](#), [219](#), [220](#), [221](#)). According to former NSW Minister for Education, John Aquilina, in the NSW Government handbook [“Environmental education policy for schools”](#):**

*“The New South Wales Government is a world leader in supporting environmental education in schools, with particular attention being given to Agenda 21, a global policy outcome of the 1992 Earth Summit. Agenda 21 has been recognised by the New South Wales Government as the basis for an internationally agreed course of action towards sustainability. This has led to legislation in a number of areas, including the Protection of the Environment Amendment (Environmental Education) Act, 1998.”*

During Parliament, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2002, Commonwealth [Liberal Member for Sturt, Christopher Pyne, sought credit for the Howard government’s Agenda 21 achievements](#):

*Mr PYNE (Sturt) (10.34 p.m.)—“This evening I would like to take the opportunity to comment on the government’s approach to sustainable development. Maintaining sustainable development is an ongoing challenge for all nations, including Australia. Tackling this issue is of continual concern to Australia, and implementing the principles of sustainable development has been carried out through a range of constructive approaches since the first Earth Summit in 1992. Australia is moving in a positive direction on this issue. The Australian assessment report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development concluded that Australia does have the necessary processes in place to achieve our targets on sustainable development, despite our opposition to ratifying the Kyoto protocol. We are also including all the stakeholders domestically. This is particularly apparent in Australia through Agenda 21 and the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development. If members are interested, then I would urge them to look at programs such as WasteWise, Coastcare, Waterwatch Australia and the Greenhouse Challenge. Each one of these programs demonstrates this government’s long-term dedication to sustainable development.”*

Also in 2002, [David Kemp](#), then Minister for Environment and Heritage in the Howard government, [wrote to Paul Tosi, General Manager of Campbelltown City Council](#), noting the Commonwealth’s strategies for promoting Agenda 21, and their funding commitments, and thanking Campbelltown Council for their co-operation. In the [October 2002 edition of Local Government Focus Online Magazine](#), the Australian Local Government Association Senior Vice President, Mayor Lynn Mason reported the attitude of David Kemp to the implementation of Agenda 21:

*“Our one hour meeting with the Minister was extremely positive,” said Mayor Mason. “The Minister acknowledged the significant contribution made by Australian Local Government to sustainability and good governance; particularly through programs and initiatives such as Local Agenda 21, Cities*

for Climate Protection, and local area environmental plans. Dr Kemp said he was impressed to see Agenda 21 as a major driver within the Local Government sector and that uptake of sustainable development was so widespread.”

In the [May 2003 edition of Local Government Focus](#). David Kemp again reiterated his satisfaction with the implementation of Agenda 21:

*“Federal Minister for the Environment, Dr David Kemp, reaffirmed the key role that Local Government plays in our quest for sustainability. ‘Over a quarter of Australia’s 700 Councils now have Local Agenda 21 plans in place,’ the Minister said. ‘Further evidence of Local Government’s leadership in this field is the fact that 168 Councils are now involved in the Cities for Climate Protection program (CCP). This represents 65 per cent of our population. Australia leads the world with the highest number of participating Councils, equating to 30 per cent of the world’s total, and more Australian Councils than any other country have reached the highest milestone in this program’.”*

Our elected representatives, namely, the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee, again [discussed the AG21 ‘conspiracy’ in parliament during senate estimates in 2011](#):  
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**Dr Grimes:** *I do not believe it is formally precluded, but the typical thing that we would expect to see is something that is done with the state government.*

**Senator LUDLAM:** *All right. You do not know what the areas are yet. You are going to wait and see who puts their hands up. I just wonder whether I could remind you that many local government authorities went to the trouble of doing Local Agenda 21 plans. Will that provide particular areas with a head start if they have gone and done all that work already as far as getting in the queue for some of this funding?*

**Mr Thompson:** *It will certainly give those areas that are selected a head start in the planning process. But, as the secretary said, we expect there to be a negotiation or a discussion with state governments about the areas that need planning most. It is not a competitive process in the same way that the suburban jobs initiative is, if you know what I mean. We expect the areas to be selected based on their high growth potential or need.*

**Senator LUDLAM:** *The reason I am raising it is that there is a possibility there to really complement agenda 21 work that has already been done or completely undermine it and trash it, depending on how it is handled. These programs come and go. People have bright ideas. Then suddenly a program gets killed and people head off and do other things. So I guess I am just putting that out there as a bit of a caution. People have been thinking about these things for years. The Commonwealth has a reputation for occasionally just ploughing and parachuting over the top and trying to start everything again from scratch. Mr Sullivan, you look like you are—*

**Mr Sullivan:** *It is the issue of coming over the top. While a majority of the funding of this new measure is for the strategic assessment side of the business, which is the planning lever, there is also funding provision here for capacity building at the local government level, which is not for us to do the plan; it is to actually support the planning at local levels. Indeed, you Tuesday, 24 May 2011 Senate are right, Senator; Local Agenda 21 plans have been running since two to three years post Rio, so there is a wealth of knowledge there that, again, can be drawn on—*

**Senator LUDLAM:** *There is.*

**Mr Sullivan:** *By councils. But it is not just the Commonwealth coming in through the EPBC processes. There is also a funding provision there, which is important in terms of capacity building, to actually assist in this process.*

**Senator LUDLAM:** *Before I move on, the secretariat that was managing councils' applications and movement through the different Local Agenda 21 plans were operating on a budget of about \$3*

million. It got killed and they had to sack everybody. I am just wondering whether, in your view—perhaps you will shunt me off to a different portfolio—there is any consideration to refund that tiny little appropriation of people who were doing great work so that you folk do not have to reinvent the wheel?

**Mr Thompson:** Senator, I have to say that in the design of this measure so far, that is not envisaged.

**The Environment and Communications Legislation Committee** which discussed the AG21 ‘conspiracy’ in 2011 included Liberal Senators, Eric Abetz, Simon Birmingham, Mary Jo Fisher, Bill Heffernan, Gary Humphries, Ian Macdonald, Marise Payne, Judith Troeth; National Party Senators Ron Boswell, Barnaby Joyce; ALP Senators Doug Cameron, Anne McEwen, Dana Wortley; and Greens Senators, Scott Ludlam and Rachel Siewert.

During [the 2011-2012 budget review Agenda 21 was again under discussion in Federal Parliament](#):

*“Sustainability plans or Local Agenda 21 plans were developed for many local government authorities in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2000 it was reported that 75 councils were developing Local Agenda 21 plans<sup>[7]</sup> and in 2002 it was estimated that one-third of councils in Victoria would have an overarching Local Sustainability or Local Agenda 21 Strategic Plan.<sup>[8]</sup> An example of a council involved in this process can be found on the [Tackling Sustainability Progress](#) page of the Western Australia City of Stirling website.<sup>[9]</sup>*

*It appears that the Government’s proposed funding towards the development of seven sustainability plans will have a slightly different purpose from those of Local Agenda 21. The plans will be developed for regional and coastal high growth centres by state and local governments, and will be funded with \$29.2 million over four years.<sup>[10]</sup> Apparently one aim of these plans is to facilitate development in these centres by streamlining environmental decision-making under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The sustainability plans will be assessed under the strategic assessment provisions of the Act.<sup>[11]</sup>”*

**According to the [ICLEI Oceania recognition breakfast at the ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government](#), and the [ALGA Submission to the Productivity Commission on the issues paper: Barriers to effective climate change adaptation](#) in 2011:**

*“For more than twenty years many local governments have pursued a range of policies and activities to address climate change in the context of Ecological Sustainable Development (ESD) following the adoption of Local Agenda 21 framework arising out of the 1992 United Nations Summit in Rio”*