



# **Environment Division Education Strategy 2005-2009**

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*Prepared by*

Environment Division  
HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Preface

The Environment Division is committed to Hornsby Shire's vision of *Creating a Living Environment*. The Division is responsible for a range of environmental services. It manages parks, an extensive tree canopy and some 6,000 hectares of bushland (which is the largest area in NSW under control of a single Council). It is also responsible for the management of waterways and water quality, as well as waste throughout the Shire. Finally, the Division is responsible for ensuring that the laws to protect the environment and community health are adhered to and that community and Council staff understand and act upon their responsibilities towards the environment.

To enable the Environment Division's core activities to have their ultimate reach and success, it is essential that both staff and community of Hornsby Shire have an understanding of, and act upon, their individual and collective understanding of sustainability, by *creating a living environment...* To address this need the Environment Division staff responsible for education (in its broadest context) have prepared this Strategy. Consultant, EcoSTEPS has facilitated the development of this Strategy.

The Strategy has been prepared for the Division to:

- consolidate and facilitate collaboration of educational approaches across the areas of waste management, environmental health and protection, water catchments, parks and landscapes, bushland and biodiversity management, and overall sustainability;
- align the Divisional approach to State and Commonwealth strategies and policies; and
- provide a strategic document to give direction to Council's environmental education activities over 2005-2009, housing separate strategies and action plans from diverse disciplinary teams.

## 1.2. Context

Whilst grounded in Council's vision for sustainability, this Strategy has been developed within the Environment Division and represents its goals alone. As the process by which this strategy has been developed is more closely aligned with the principles and processes of *environmental education* than "*learning for sustainability*". The term *environmental education* will be used throughout this document. This Strategy has not sought input from other Divisions of Council or the community.

However, the production and implementation of this strategy is an essential stepping stone towards *learning for sustainability* for Council. The future development of a "Learning for Sustainability Strategy" would involve all areas of Council, in particular Community Services, Planning, Works and Strategy, whose work is closely aligned to the sustainability goals of Council. However, this Strategy provides the Environment Division with a framework to collaboratively plan and deliver leading edge sustainability initiatives in Hornsby Shire. It presents mechanisms to share education resources, thinking and risk, whilst measuring and evaluating outcomes. It will also assist in synchronising the development of Divisional policies through a process of learning and partnership.

In the spirit of *learning for sustainability* the following activities have been used to guide this Strategy's development:

- collaboration within, and between, teams to ensure that all view points are incorporated;
- learning for sustainability processes have been utilised build the capacity of Division’s educators and underpin the development of the strategy;
- incorporation of the best elements of existing team strategies and action plans; and
- utilisation of national and international learning for sustainability resource materials and documents.

This strategy acknowledges that several whole of Council sustainability initiatives will be adopted and implemented in the next few years. These include (but not exclusively) adopting triple bottom line reporting, extending the integrated management system to achieve ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certification across Council, implementing green purchasing, as well as a total water cycle management strategy across the local government area.

To ensure the delivery of environmental education that meets the needs of both Hornsby Shire staff and community, this strategy highlights the need to:

- contribute to, and utilise, research that reflects learning needs and trends both locally, nationally and internationally;
- improve branding and communications;
- educate staff and build capacity for sustainability;
- increase the development and use of internal and external sustainability partnerships;
- utilise opportunities for inter- and intra-Divisional work, which adds value to Divisional programs and best meets community needs; and
- evaluate and monitor environmental education processes and procedures including the success of this strategic plan and the programs it delivers.

Through this Strategy the Environmental Division will pilot the use of *outcome hierarchies* to help plan implementation, as well as monitor and evaluate the success of the Strategy. The Department of Environment and Conservation’s recent publication “*Does Your Project Make a Difference*” (DEC, 2004) highlights the need to provide robust evaluation that demonstrates a move from intention to action with regard to sustainability initiatives. Recognising that environmental education has not been effectively monitored and evaluated in the past at local government level, and that Hornsby Council is recognised for it’s innovation within the environmental field, this document will be used to assist in guiding this strategy.

## 2. Vision and Aims

This Strategy is guided by Council’s vision of

**“Creating a living environment...”**

### 2.1. Aims

The Environment Division has prepared this Strategy using the NSW Government goals for *Learning for Sustainability* (2002)<sup>1</sup>, and with reference to innovative national and international best practice to achieve:

#### *Learning for Sustainability Goals*

1. A more holistic approach to environmental education
2. Improved access to environmental education programs
3. Better planning, coordination and partnership programs
4. Enhanced professional development and training
5. Quality improvement, research and evaluation
6. Appropriate resourcing and incentives.

*NSW Government (2002)*

<sup>1</sup> Learning for Sustainability: This plan is aimed at achieving effective and integrated environmental education which builds the capacity of the people of NSW to be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability (NSW Government, 2002).

- an increase in broad community participation in decision-making, actions and practices for a sustainable future;
- strengthened partnerships and learning, both internally and between Council and the wider community, towards enhancing sustainability;
- delivery of tailored programs that meet the specific needs and expectations of the community, based on quality social research; and
- the delivery of innovative education programs that are aligned with objectives and outcomes of international, national and state environmental education and sustainability legislation and policies.

To achieve these aims this Strategy:

- provides an outline of the rationale and proposed direction of education within the Environment Division;
- provides consistency in the principles underpinning all Division education programs;
- facilitates the integration of environmental education within all key functions of the Division, through adequate resourcing, thus complimenting other Divisional activities such as compliance;
- clearly aligns education programs and approaches with Council's strategic intent of "*Creating a living environment...*" by linking with the State of the Environment Report and Management Plan;
- provides a framework from which action plans can be developed, evaluated and reviewed in line with specific program objectives; and
- will be evaluated and reviewed in accordance with specified time frames, to ensure it is meeting its purpose.

This comprehensive Environment Division Education Strategy provides a set of over-arching principles, core outcomes and an environmental education framework for all teams. Building on existing sustainability initiatives, it endeavours to enhance synergies and cross-team collaborations in the development of new programs, partnerships and local community stakeholder networks. This can enable a more holistic approach to sustainability, improved resource efficiencies and effectiveness in program delivery.

### 3. Scope

This Strategy sets the overall direction of environmental education for the Environment Division for the period 2005-2009. Guided by this Strategy, team specific strategies (four yearly) and action plans (annually) will be prepared to ensure that the full scope of responsibilities for each team is addressed within the holistic direction of the Division. The use of distinct evaluation tools (such as separate outcome hierarchies) at the divisional and team levels will enable ongoing monitoring and evaluation of education across the Division.

### 4. Rationale

The United Nations has declared 2005-2014 the Decade in Education for Sustainable Development. It has called upon governments at all levels to realign their education policies and strategies towards learning that empower the community to take responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. Its focus is upon learning that is participatory and results in change - be it environmental, organisational, or cultural change or a personal shift in thinking about the environment and community.

As part of Australia's national action plan *Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future* (2000) the Federal Government has introduced the National Environmental Education Council,

the National Environmental Education Network and the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES). These bodies together are directing environmental education across Australia.

The NSW Government released its environmental education plan *Learning for Sustainability* in 2002. Recognising the importance of Local Action 21, *Learning for Sustainability* identifies local government as a major partner for implementation. Referring to international and national best practices, the Environment Division Education Strategy builds on the key principles and priority actions identified in the NSW Plan.

Acknowledging international, national and state advances towards sustainability and that Hornsby Shire Council's vision of *Creating a Living Environment* directs the 2006-2008 Management Plan, this strategy considers the elements of "*Creating a living environment...*" holistically to ensure a systemic approach to sustainability:

- Working with our community
- Conserving our environment
- Contributing to community development through sustainable facilities and services
- Fulfilling our community's vision in planning for the future of the Shire
- Supporting our diverse economy
- Maintaining sound corporate and financial management

Other Council policies and documents have also informed this strategy, including Council's Draft Social Plan 2005-2010, Social Atlas 2001 and annual community surveys. These will continue to provide demographic, values, attitudes, knowledge and behaviour data that is useful in prioritising, designing, implementing and evaluating environmental education programs.

Since the early 1990's environmental education has played a key role in both environmental management and compliance activities, and has contributed to the creation of a learning organisation within the Environment Division. Over time, the approach has evolved to encompass the issues managed by the Environmental Health and Protection, Waste Management, Bushland and Biodiversity Management, Water Catchments, Parks and Landscapes Teams.

The activities of the Sustainable Action Committee<sup>2</sup> are particularly acknowledged for increasing the capacity for local action. In 1999, the Sustainable Action Committee determined to identify and measure resident's values for the Shire and produce a vision for the sustainable future of the Shire through the Community Sustainability Indicators Project (CSIP). The CSIP process identified the community values and generated both a community vision and a set of community sustainability indicators that are used to monitor progress toward sustainability in the Shire. It is these indicators that underpin Council's Management plan and State of Environment Report.

As community education and in-house professional development are key drivers for moving towards achieving sustainable communities and organisations, the Environment Division has a vital role to play in modelling culture shifts and changes.

Whilst the Strategy has been prepared by and directs staff and management from all teams across the Division, its primary audience is officers responsible for education. Team education

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<sup>2</sup> The Hornsby Shire Sustainable Action Committee consists of community representatives, Council staff and Councillors. Its purpose is to assist Council in pursuing a Local Action 21 program in order to achieve its strategic intent of creating a living environment.

strategies and action plans that address the specific functions of each team will be developed using the framework outlined in this divisional strategy.

## 5. Principles of environmental education

This Strategy adopts a flexible approach to environmental education as it recognises that there are a range of perspectives, approaches and tools that are required in education to achieve holistic change toward sustainability. As such, there is no single way of thinking, approach or model that can address the needs of *all* stakeholders or create the change necessary to achieve sustainability. However, to create consistency in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all team education programs and activities core environmental education principles will be found in all programs.

In addition to triple bottom line considerations, the following questions should be considered whilst designing all education programs<sup>3</sup>:

1. *Vision:*
  - Does the program/activity contribute to change towards Hornsby Shire Council's vision for sustainability?
  - Does the program/activity assist learners in creating their own vision for a sustainable future?
2. *Critical thinking and reflection:*
  - Does the program/activity engage learners to think or reflect critically upon their role in creating change for sustainability?
  - Does the program/activity enable learners to ask *why*?
3. *Participation in decision-making:*
  - Does the program/activity enable learners to engage in decision-making concerning social or environmental change?
  - Does the program/activity teach learners how they can further engage in decision-making concerning social or environmental change?
  - Does the program/activity inform the learner of their rights and responsibilities regarding the environment?
4. *Partnerships:*
  - Does the program/activity actively seek to engage stakeholders in partnerships that involve shared vision and goals, resources, knowledge and innovation, benefits and risk?
  - Does the program/activity plan for and address the power issues around the subject and stakeholders?
  - Does the program/activity considered how the learning can be used and occurs through the process of engaging in the partnership?
5. *Systemic thinking and systems change:*
  - Does the program/activity enable learners to think systemically about issues of sustainability?
  - Does the program/activity enable learners to step into the shoes of other stakeholders to gain understanding from their perspectives?
  - Does the program/activity teach learners to think about the results of their actions systemically?
  - Has the program been designed to enable continuous evaluation and improvement?

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<sup>3</sup> NB: Team Education Strategies may contain additional questions that are pertinent to their service areas.

## 6. Stakeholders

“Creating a living environment...” is the responsibility of the whole community. This Strategy addresses the capacity of all the community, both individually and at an institutional level, to enable positive change for the environment. It guides the development and delivery of both external and internal education programs.

Stakeholders including both learners and potential partners can be broadly categorised into five areas:

1. General community (residents and visitors);
2. Schools (including early childhood education and higher education institutions);
3. Businesses and industries that reside in, or impact upon the Shire;
4. Councillors and council staff; and
5. Other local, regional, state and federal government and non-government agencies.

There are significant resources available (including Council's State of the Environment Report, Social Plan 2005-2010, Social Atlas 2001 and annual community surveys) that contribute to identifying the current state of community knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, values and practices in and around the biophysical environment. This baseline information is able to provide valuable insights into the capacity of the internal and external community and can be utilised to plan and evaluate environmental education programs developed by the Environment Division.

Each Team will undertake stakeholder mapping to identify stakeholder partners and target audiences for each specific program. It is important when identifying stakeholders to consider the change required and the change achievable by each stakeholder. Methods for both empowerment (individual) and emancipation (structural/political) need to be considered to ensure the education is effective.

## 7. Team responsibilities for education

To ensure efficiency and co-ordination in education across teams within the Division, the following table has been prepared based upon *Learning for Sustainability's* (NSW Government 2003) identification of key issues of sustainability, along with additions specific to the Hornsby Shire and Environment Division. This table will ensure that teams have a clear idea of their responsibilities in education, enhancing the Division's effectiveness in cross-team collaboration and minimising the duplication of efforts across teams.

**Issues of Sustainability  
and Team responsible for the education relating to these issues**

\*Issues as defined in *Learning for Sustainability* (2002)

1 – Primary team

2 – Secondary support

Environmental / Sustainability Issue*	Water	Waste	Bush	Parks	EH&P	Other
Acid Sulphate Soils	2				1	
Air pollution					1	
Biodiversity conservation (Includes land-based and aquatic conservation programs)	2		1			
Chemical management		2			1	
Cleaner Production					1	
Community involvement in nature and cultural heritage conservation			1		2	1 Planning
Drinking water quality and quantity N/A						
Enhancing understanding of Aboriginal land management practices			2			1 Cmnty Serv / Planning/ NPWS
Landscape & catchment management issues (Including soils, water, vegetation management)**						
a. Landscape and catchment management - soils					2	
b. Landscape and catchment management - water	1					
c. Landscape and catchment management - vegetation				1		
Littering and illegal dumping		1	2		1	
Minimising impact of recreation & tourism			2			1 Cmnty Serv.
Noise pollution					1	
Promoting ecologically sustainable ways of decision making and living	2		2		1	
Promoting liveable communities (Including sustainable building, design and construction)			2		1	2 Planning
Safe disposal / management of Asbestos		1			2	
Salinity management	1					
Stormwater pollution – CRR	1					
Stormwater pollution - POEO					1	
Sustainable agriculture	2		2		1	
Sustainable energy use and reduce greenhouse gases					1	
Sustainable management of coastal zone	1		2			
Sustainable transport					2	1 Traffic
Waste management and recycling		1		2		
<b>Other – outside of <i>Learning for Sustainability</i></b>						
Fire control			1			
Water Conservation	1				2	
Land modifications			2	2	1	
Weed Management			1			
Food safety					1	
Public Health					1	
Skin penetration					1	
Companion Animals					1	
Nutrition					1	

## Monitoring and evaluation tools

The Education Strategy requires a comprehensive, transparent and robust monitoring and evaluation approach.

Monitoring and evaluation will be ongoing and undertaken throughout the lifecycle of this Strategy. Program and project evaluations will be planned at the same time as the program and appropriate funding allocated from the budget.

Following the DEC's review of the delivery of successful environmental education across the State, DEC strongly encouraged the use of outcome hierarchies for the evaluation of environmental education programs.

Based upon the aims of this Strategy the outcome hierarchy (attached to this Strategy) will be piloted in 2005-2009 to assess the success and effectiveness of the strategy, whilst ensuring continuous improvement and innovation. It will assist in prioritising, planning and reporting education initiatives within and between teams. It is envisaged that the outcome hierarchy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Whilst the use of outcome hierarchies in teams is being trialled for 12 months, it is envisaged that the use of the evaluation process will ensure the continual improvement of education programs and enable Hornsby Shire Council to attract competitive funding from grant agencies, whilst achieving increased recognition for the delivery of successful and effective education programs.

An evaluative report of the Strategy will be submitted to management in 2009, whilst the action plans will be reported upon annually. This will ensure more effective evaluation of the projects and plans according to the strategic intent contained within this Strategy, and more effective reporting of accountability in Council's State of the Environment Report and Management Plan.

## 9. Communications and branding

Hornsby Shire Council has a strong history of leading its community by example to progress sustainability. To this end, in 2001 Council and the community-based Sustainable Action Committee developed Hornsby earthwise, Council's framework for corporate and community sustainability initiatives, which guarantees that all projects and programs significantly contribute to achieving Council's vision of "creating a living environment...". Hornsby earthwise represents the outcomes of the Community Sustainability Indicators Project and provides a strategic direction for Council and community efforts to advance sustainability, and a collaborative, integrative framework aimed at evaluating Council's progress and building on success.

Rather than taking the form of a document, Hornsby earthwise is more a dynamic concept promoting culture change, demonstrated through its incorporation into existing Council policies and plans. To enable consistency in messages and programs arising from this strategy the *Hornsby earthwise* brand will be used for collaborative projects/programs across teams within and outside the Division. Single team programs will also be able to make use of the *Hornsby earthwise* branding. Existing team brands will continue to be used on individual team projects.



## 10. Reference documentation

### Essential Reading – All Teams

*Council's Management Plan, Social Plan, [Social Atlas](#), Annual Community Surveys and the [State of the Environment Report](#).*

Department Environment and Conservation (2004) *Does Your Project Make a Difference?*  
Department Environment and Conservation, NSW

Environment Australia (2000) [Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future: A National Action Plan](#). Canberra: Dept of the Environment and Heritage.

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### Recommended Reading

#### [CSIP Final Report](#)

International Association of Public Participation - Spectrum of Community Participation available at <http://iap2.org/practitionertools/index.shtml> [accessed 20/01/05]

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- Thessaloniki International Conference organised by UNESCO and the Government of Greece (8 – 12 December 1997) University of Athens, Athens.
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- WCED (1987) *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

## Appendices

1. [Divisional Strategy Outcome Hierarchy](#)
2. [Outcome Hierarchy template](#)
3. [Communications Plan template](#)
4. [Glossary and Terms](#) used in this Strategy
5. [The International Association of Public Participation - Spectrum of Community Participation](#)