

# **Sustainability Strategies for Regional Local Councils in Australia**

## **A discussion around some possible strategic approaches for local councils as both strategic social enterprises & catalyzing hubs for sustainable regions**

This 'ideas paper' argues that local councils can be one of the key drivers in catalyzing the emergence of sustainable communities & regions. The 'whole of community' engagement process, advocated here, emphasizes community, business, enterprise and govt. agency reps collaborating together in partnered innovations and initiatives. These can involve improving energy-eco efficiencies, renewable energy, regenerating landscapes, habitats, facilitating new smart green niche enterprise clusters and improving the 'liveability' of local places, towns and our cities.

Strategic regional alliances of local councils such as NESAC, are already and can play a critical role in supporting sustainable innovations 'on the ground' much like other leading edge Councils in Australia are doing such as the City of Melbourne's partnered initiatives around water recycling. But this involves a shift in mindset beyond notions of Councils as mere 'local service -infrastructure providers' and 'local planning agencies for controlling development and ensuring compliance with base level building codes'.



evolving new ways of thinking, seeing, knowing  
and being for growing sustainable futures

Evolveris is a not for profit  
action think tank based in New England  
on the east coast of Australia

**An Evolveris Ideas Paper No 2- supporting discussions on catalyzing and growing sustainable regions  
September 2nd 2008**

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# Sustainability Strategies for Regional Local Councils in Australia

The strategic approach initially outlined here is based on that recommended by the ICLEI, the Global Sustainability Agenda 21 for local councils.

Insights around fostering sustainable practices have also been derived from Melbourne City Council, Sunshine Coast and Noosa Council, the sustainable strategy outlined by the University of the Sunshine Coast, Latrobe and Stirling Councils across Australia.

We view it important that sustainability audits and sustainability performance management systems such as dashboard indicators be developed to help measure a council or strategic regional alliances of councils, measure their progress towards becoming a sustainable enterprise.#

## 2. Catalyzing Strategies for Regional / Local Councils supporting the growth of sustainable regions

**Identify Key Focus Areas** with regional communities & stakeholders

**Establish Baseline Measures** where are we starting from - the state of the region as a system

**Key Targets** - What sustainable practices and re-designs do we work on first

**Action Plans** - **Key Sustainability Indicators** that show our progress towards regional sustainability

**Sustainability Dashboards** Sustainability Performance Management

Review Reflection Re-think Re-Design

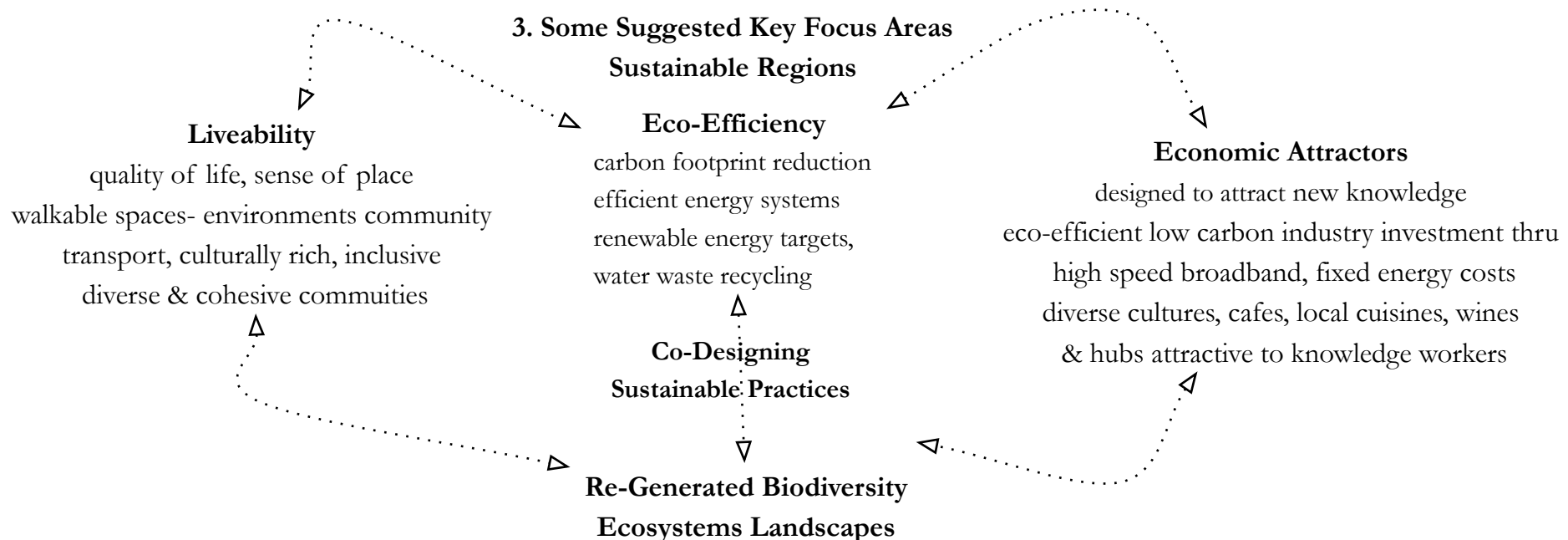
### 1. Key Management Processes



The notion of **councils as social enterprises** envisages local councils as not just providing key community / infrastructure services but as ensuring social, environmental and economic returns to the regional community, stakeholders and the environment. Surpluses are needed to ensure their on-going financial sustainability.

Strategies for sustainable local councils are seen here as **investments**, part of a continuous improvement business development model focusing on achieving cost reductions and new income streams from 'eco-efficiencies' from energy savings, reduced carbon footprints, water and waste recycling.

Local Councils are **potential catalyzers and hubs** - **one of the key drivers** for growing sustainable regions and in 'co-designing' sustainable places, environments and local economies thru partnered sustainability innovations. Councils can help facilitate community, enterprise and govt agency initiatives and new enterprise such as integrated regional waste recycling enterj & carbon sequestration - biodiversity trading.



**Co-Design** is our term for the collaborative re-design & learning process from engaging communities stakeholders, agencies & partnered enterprises to develop local solutions and sustainable re-designs for the built environment, water, energy, waste systems and even regional identities / brands. This notion is based on the action research work of Michael O'Loughlin and Manuela Taboada in Evolveris in the concept plan and brand development projects for the Waterfall Way as a sustainable regional tourism destination