Sustainable Penrith
Action Plan

Sustainable
Penrith

Contents

**Sustainability: Towards
a prosperous future**

For some time now, governments at all levels, and in all areas of the world have been faced with the challenge of how to better manage the often competing pressures of society, the environment, and the economy. This challenge, the concept of Sustainability and the process of recognising, valuing and balancing these three aspects has been recognised as one of the greatest challenges facing not only the world's governments, but our industries, businesses and communities as well.

The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan is Penrith City Council's plan of action towards a sustainable future for our City. It builds on Council's commitment to sustainability and a continuing program of improvement by encouraging an integrated management process within Council in which the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and Local Agenda 21 are implicit.

This Plan seeks to establish the paths by which these principles are recognised and incorporated into our future directions and identifies actions for achieving long term sustainable outcomes for both the Council and the City.

It recognises five fundamental roles for Council in delivering a sustainable future for the City—as a leader, facilitator, educator, regulator and service provider. It also recognises that the

successful implementation of this plan is a shared responsibility. Commitment of Council's senior management and staff is essential to its success, as is the support, endorsement and participation of the City's communities and elected representatives.

The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan also acknowledges that making Penrith sustainable is a continuous and long-term process. There is no one identifiable point where we can say we have achieved sustainability. Key changes to the way we think, act and make decisions, however, will help ensure that we achieve sustainable outcomes.

Background

In 1999, Penrith City Council adopted the Sustainable Penrith program. In doing so, it acknowledged the emerging international view that a healthy future for our environment, our economy and our society, can only be achieved by balancing the pressures and demands of these three elements.

Since adopting this program, Penrith City Council has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the sustainability of Council as an organisation, and of the City as a whole. These initiatives have ranged in focus and in scope to include the assessment of Council's own operations and the development of policies and programs to work towards achieving a more Sustainable Penrith.

Two major tasks which have resulted from this program, and which have fed into the development of this our Action Plan, have been the internal review conducted in 2001, and the independent review conducted in 2002. The purpose of these reviews was to evaluate how each of the departments across Council had incorporated sustainability into their policy formulation, decision making processes and operational activities in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

Following on from these reviews, Council is now tackling a range of issues, from reducing greenhouse emissions and water use, to improving resource management and developing sustainable business practices. We have been working on campaigns such as the Cities for Climate Protection Program and the Water Campaign, trialling new technologies, improving the energy efficiency of our major administration buildings through an Energy Performance Contract, using recycled or recyclable materials to build our roads, and working with schools to restore and install redundant computers in Council childcare centres.

The Sustainable Penrith program and the Sustainable Penrith Action Plan provides Council with a platform for innovation in improving our performance as an organisation and in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Adopting sustainable
practices in all that
we do. Using recycled
materials to conserve
natural resources

The IT in Schools project.
Working with local schools to
install refurbished computers in
Council's Child Care Centres

3

The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan seeks to work in conjunction with Council's existing strategic planning framework to ensure that sustainability principles are incorporated into the organisation's decision-making, planning and operational activities. It builds on Council's commitment to sustainability and a continuing program of improvement, by identifying additional actions to support our journey towards sustainability.

The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan complements Council's strategic planning framework by:

• Creating a sense of ownership that will encourage commitment to sustainability throughout the organisation's culture

• Improving the connectivity of Council's activities

• Enabling Council to respond effectively and efficiently to its legislative requirements

• Improving the coordination of Council's information base to facilitate the capture and management of data

• Guiding Council's decision-making and daily activities within a sustainability framework

• Developing a framework for monitoring Council's implementation of sustainability principles in its processes and activities, and

• Involving all sectors of the community and building partnerships.

Within Council, the Sustainable Penrith Action Plan will work towards permeating the principles of sustainability into strategic initiatives, systems and processes.

In the wider community, the Sustainable Penrith Action Plan will enhance public awareness of sustainability principles and encourage active participation in Council's future directions.

Council staff working with volunteers to rehabilitate the banks of the Nepean

Sustainability Street: from Council through to the community

Defining Sustainability

For sustainability to be translated from abstract concept into practical deliverable actions, a clearly and commonly understood definition of 'sustainability' is needed. The challenge however, is to synthesise the many dimensions of sustainability into a generally acceptable definition.

One of the more commonly used definitions of sustainability is taken from the Brundtland Report (1987). A report produced by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development.

"Sustainable Development is Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs."
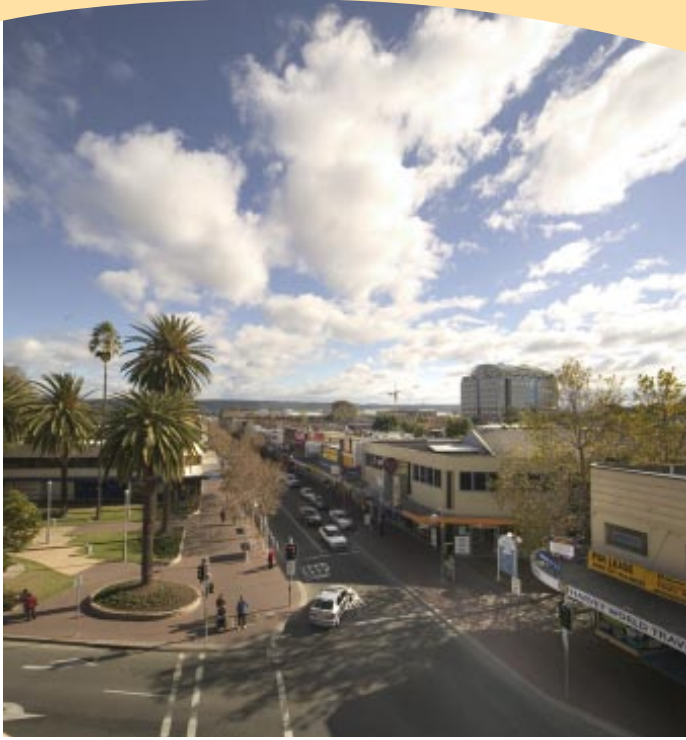
At Penrith City Council, the principles of sustainability underpin both our values and our way of doing things. The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan recognises these principles, and is a commitment to ensuring a higher quality of life for all—both now and in the future—through economic growth, environmental protection and social equity.

For Council, sustainability is about seeking to improve the way we operate. It means better integrating economic, environmental and social considerations into our decision-making processes, and balancing short-term priorities with longer-term needs.

Sustainability however, cannot be achieved by Council alone, nor can it be achieved in only one area such as the environment. Involvement from all sectors, all levels of government, business, industry and the community is essential.

Meeting the needs
of present and
future generations

The South Creek
Agricultural Education
Project: Building
relationships within
our communities

**Planning for long-term
economic and social security**

**Supporting groups like the
St Stephens Restoration
Team to protect our heritage
for future generations**

**Sustainability St:
Bringing communities
together to reduce their
ecological footprint**

Internationally, there have been a number of attempts at developing frameworks that identify criteria and performance indicators to measure progress towards sustainability. In 2003, Penrith City Council adopted the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Principles for Sustainable Cities to guide our journey towards sustainability and the development of this, our action plan.

The UNEP Principles for Sustainable Cities were developed at the UNEP conference on Sustainable Cities in Melbourne, April 2002. Launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002, they have been formally adopted in the document 'Local Action 21' which establishes the direction for local government for the next 10 years.

Developed with the intent to guide thinking and help build a vision of environmentally healthy and sustainable cities, these principles can be effectively applied in the consideration of current practices and in working towards the long-term sustainability of Council as an organisation and of the City as a whole.

The UNEP Principles for Sustainable Cities:

1. Provide a long-term vision for cities based on sustainability, intergenerational, social and political equity; and their individuality

2. Achieve long-term economic and social security

3. Recognise the intrinsic value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems and their protect and restore them

4. Enable communities to minimise their ecological footprint

5. Build on the characteristics of ecosystems in the development and nurturing of healthy and sustainable cities

6. Recognise and build on the characteristics of cities including their human and cultural values, history and natural systems

7. Empower people and foster participation

8. Expand and enable cooperative networks to work towards a common sustainable future

9. Promote sustainable production and consumption, through appropriate use of environmentally sound technologies for cities and effective demand management

10. Enable continual improvement, based on accountability and transparency and good governance.

** Note: further explanation of these principles can be found in Appendix One.

Sustainability and the Role of Council

Sustainability is best achieved through collaboration amongst a range of stakeholders—individuals, businesses, community groups, institutions and government.

The Sustainable Penrith Action Plan recognises five fundamental roles for Council—as a leader, facilitator, educator, regulator and service provider. That is the heart of our balanced approach—a way of thinking, a way of working and a way of governing which starts by valuing in a considered way, our economic, social and environmental goals.

Council's role in encouraging sustainability should be one of a catalyst, fostering public and private partnerships, stimulating interest and communicating the importance of achieving sustainable development. Council should also provide a strong leadership role to foster that collaboration.

Council as a 'leader'

Council can, through its own actions and way of doing things, act as a role model for others. In its dialogue with the community and other stakeholders, Council can act to draw together diverse interests and strive towards attaining greater consensus on sustainable outcomes for the City.

Council as a 'facilitator'

Council can act as a catalyst to engender interaction amongst stakeholders and to form strategic alliances aimed at promoting sustainability initiatives and demonstrating positive ways of moving forward.
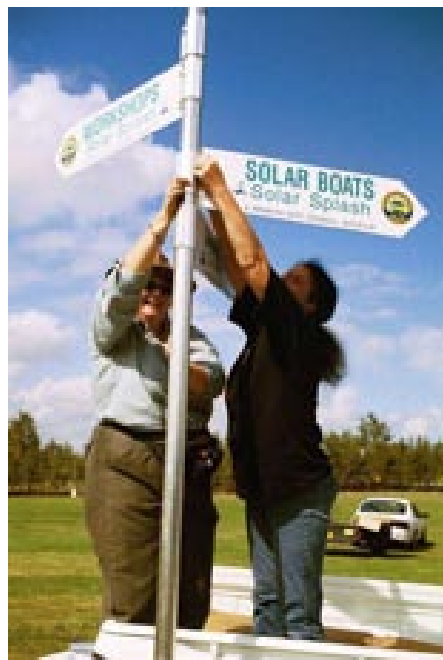
Council as an 'educator'

Council can play a fundamental role in educating the community and other stakeholders in the long term benefits of sustainability and sound practices. A broad range of opportunities exists for Council to articulate its vision for a Sustainable Penrith, and engender knowledge and interest in others.

Council as a 'regulator'

Council has a statutory responsibility to implement and enforce a range of legislative requirements aimed at considering and promoting sustainability in the interests of the long-term health of our environment.

Council as a 'service provider'

Council has a strong commitment to delivering the services needed by its communities, and ensuring that both City and Council resources are responsibly managed. Council's role as service provider aims to assist in building the long-term health of the City's communities.

Reducing our resource use, improving the water efficiency of our facilities

Raising awareness through community events

Working with industry to recognise the value of sustainable business practices

Sustainable Penrith Action Plan —A Framework for Action

In order to better integrate sustainability into the planning, decision-making and operational activities of Council, the Sustainable Penrith Action Plan has been developed to complement and feed into Council's principle planning document, the Strategic Plan. It outlines a range of priorities to assist Council in continuing to work towards the improved integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in our activities, processes and systems, and encompasses both the Council's operating environment and the broader Citywide issues.

Developed around the framework provided by the 2000–2004 Strategic Plan and the issues contained in the master program for Council's operating environment, the Sustainable Penrith Action Plan outlines a range of actions that span the whole of Council's operations. The incorporation of these actions into Council's strategic and management planning process will ensure the continual improvement of Council's operating environment and, consequently, the long-term sustainability of the City.

1. Service selection and delivery

1.1 Effective communication and direction reinforces sustainably responsible practices	(a) Provide information on good internal sustainable practices and initiatives
	(b) Encourage and recognise innovative sustainable practices and initiatives
	(c) Continue, improve and report on the outcomes of regular department sustainability audits
	(d) Develop and implement a program to enhance awareness, understanding and commitment, in local communities, for the principles of sustainability
1.2 Sustainability principles underpin asset management	(a) Develop sustainability criteria for asset planning, asset design, asset construction, and asset maintenance
	(b) Implement the principles of 'universal design' in asset planning, asset design, asset construction, and asset maintenance

2. Management of the organisation

2.1 Sustainability principles underpin Council's review and reporting mechanisms	(a) Investigate and implement a review and reporting (monitoring and evaluation) approach that is based on sustainability principles, and incorporates relevant Sustainability Indicators for the City and for Council
	(b) Develop and implement an annual corporate Sustainability Report
	(c) Use existing consultation forums (internal and external) to regularly seek feedback regarding the organisation's sustainability performance

New developments such as the Joan Sutherland Centre build on the principles of Sustainable Design

2.2	A culture of sustainability is developed and supported	(a)	Implement a process that ensures sustainability principles guide the organisation's decision-making
		(b)	Continue involvement in emerging best practice programs and initiatives
		(c)	Identify appropriate reform initiatives, and advocate for State and Federal government commitment
		(d)	Continue to build a network of understanding, knowledge and expertise through collaborative partnerships with key environmental, social and economic organisations
		(e)	Identify and implement strategies to minimise the ecological footprints, for Council and the City, through continuous improvement
2.3	Effective risk management is practised	(a)	Integrate sustainability criteria with existing risk management processes

3. Finance

| 3.1 | Principles of social responsibility underpin financial management | (a) | Investigate an approach of ethical investment |
| | | (b) | Support the continuing implementation of sustainable practices and initiatives with funding from the 'Sustainability Revolving Fund' |

4. Workforce

4.1	A culture of sustainability is developed and supported	(a)	Introduce a 'Manual of Good Conduct' to assist in enhancing understanding about sustainability and appropriate practices
		(b)	Implement a program of 'sustainability awareness' for new staff, through the existing induction program
		(c)	Conduct training on 'sustainable work practices' for all staff, and implement a recurrent 'sustainability awareness' professional development program
		(d)	Actively support staff participation in external sustainability training opportunities
4.2	A flexible, skilled, motivated and valued workforce is in place	(a)	Develop and implement a policy that actively promotes flexible working arrangements, and ensure the policy is applied consistently
		(b)	Develop and implement a policy that seeks to deliver an organisational workforce that more accurately reflects the diversity of the City's populations and communities
		(c)	Develop and implement a policy that actively encourages opportunities for professional development, retraining, and further study
		(d)	Develop and implement a policy that ensures staff workloads are reasonable and equitable, and changes to responsibilities and tasks do not increase overall work volumes
		(e)	Ensure that work practices and policies are consistent with the development of a 'learning organisation'

5. Procedures and systems

5.1	Sustainability principles underpin Council's decisions and management practices	(a) Develop and implement meaningful key sustainability indicators for the City, in partnership with our local communities
		(b) Develop and explicitly incorporate sustainability principles, actions, and City-wide indicators in future Strategic Plans
		(c) Develop comprehensive Sustainability Indicators, relevant to Council and community goals
		(d) Investigate the adoption of 'stretch goals'
		(e) Implement the agreed sustainability framework and principles for Council's systems and processes
		(f) Apply sustainability principles to the existing Project Evaluation application and decision-making process
		(g) Establish a mechanism for reviewing existing activities and processes, prior to the purchase of capital items and the design and construction of new assets
		(h) Integrate BASIX with Council's existing design and assessment systems
		(i) Implement an electronic knowledge management system
		(j) Implement a process that captures improvement opportunities
		(k) Involve existing committees and teams in progressing Council's sustainability agenda
5.2	The organisation's operating effectiveness is continually being improved	(a) Undertake a Management System 'gap analysis', using recognised standards
		(b) Identify opportunities to implement formal Environmental or Sustainability Management Systems
		(c) Investigate and implement an approach that integrates Council's financial, strategic and management processes
		(d) Ensure any adopted Management System is based on the agreed sustainability framework and is inclusive of all organisational priorities
		(e) Develop a specific checklist for each service area, based on sustainability principles and agreed social, environmental and economic issues
5.3	Principles of social responsibility underpin products and services procurement	(a) Develop and implement an approach that commits to the purchase of socially responsible products and services

Appendix 1—UNEP Principles for Sustainable Cities

The 'UNEP Principles for Sustainable Cities' were developed at the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) conference on sustainable cities in Melbourne in April 2002. They were launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002, and were formally adopted in the final document 'Local Action 21' which establishes the direction for local government for the next 10 years.

Developed to assist cities that wish to achieve the objective of sustainable development, the UNEP Principles provide a simple set of statements on how a sustainable city would function. They are intended to guide thinking and provide a strategic framework for action.

The Principles are not prescriptive. They allow cities to develop sustainable solutions that are relevant to their particular circumstances. They can help to bring together citizens and decision-makers, whose participation and cooperation is essential in transforming our cities to sustainability.

©2004 Paul Foley

The Principles also provide cities with a foundation for the integration of international, national and local programmes, the identification of issues to be addressed, as well as the realising of synergies through partnerships.

The transformation of cities to sustainability will require cooperation between various levels of government, resource managers, the business sector, community groups and all citizens. Their collective and individual contributions are essential in achieving a common purpose. Improving the sustainability of cities will not only benefit their inhabitants, but also significantly contribute to improving the wellbeing of people around the world.

The ten UNEP Principles, and an elaboration of each, are outlined below.

Principle 1

Provide a long-term vision for cities, based on sustainability; intergenerational, social, economic and political equity; and their individuality

A long-term vision is the starting point for catalysing positive change, leading to sustainability. The vision needs to reflect the distinctive nature and characteristics of each city.

The vision should also express the shared aspirations of the people for their cities to become more sustainable. It needs to address equity, which means equal access to both natural and human resources, as well as shared responsibility for preserving the value of these resources for future generations.

A vision based on sustainability will help align and motivate communities, governments, businesses and others around a common purpose, and will provide a basis for developing a strategy, an action programme and processes to achieve that vision.

Working with Sydney Water and local schools on the Streamwatch Program

Principle 2

Achieve long-term economic and social security

Long-term economic and social security are prerequisites for beneficial change and are dependent upon environmentally sound, sustainable development. To achieve triple bottom line sustainability, economic strategies need to increase the value and vitality of human and natural systems, and conserve and renew human, financial and natural resources.

Through fair allocation of resources, economic strategies should seek to meet basic human needs in a just and equitable manner. In particular, economic strategies should guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, shelter and safe sanitation.

Cities are the locus of human diversity; their policies, structures and institutions can significantly contribute to fostering cohesive, stimulating, safe and fulfilled communities.

Principle 3

Recognise the intrinsic value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, and protect and restore them

Nature is more than a commodity for the benefit of humans. We share the Earth with many other life forms that have their own intrinsic value. They warrant our respect, whether or not they are of immediate benefit to us.

It is through people's direct experience with nature that they understand its value and gain a better appreciation of the importance of healthy habitats and ecosystems. This connection provides them with an appreciation of the need to manage our interactions with nature empathetically. Just as humans have the ability to alter the habitat and even to extinguish other species, we can also protect and restore biodiversity. Therefore, we have a responsibility to act as custodians for nature.

Principle 4

Enable communities to minimise their ecological footprint

Cities consume significant quantities of resources and have a major impact on the environment, well beyond what they can handle within their borders. These unsustainable trends need to be substantially curbed and eventually reversed. One way of describing the impact of a city is to measure its ecological footprint.

The ecological footprint of a city is a measure of the 'load' on nature imposed by meeting the needs of its population. It represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharged by that population.

Reducing the ecological footprint of a city is a positive contribution towards sustainability. Like any living system, a community consumes material, water and energy inputs, processes them into useable

forms and generates wastes. This is the 'metabolism' of the city and making this metabolism more efficient is essential to reducing the city's ecological footprint. In reducing the footprint, problems should be solved locally where possible, rather than shifting them to other geographic locations or future generations.

Principle 5

Build on the characteristics of ecosystems in the development and nurturing of healthy and sustainable cities

Cities can become more sustainable by modeling urban processes on ecological principles of form and function, by which natural ecosystems operate. The characteristics of ecosystems include diversity, adaptiveness, interconnectedness, resilience, regenerative capacity and symbiosis. These characteristics can be incorporated by cities in the development of strategies to make them more productive and regenerative, resulting in ecological, social and economic benefits.

Principle 6

Recognise and build on the distinctive characteristics of cities, including their human and cultural values, history and natural systems

Each city has a distinctive profile of human, cultural, historic and natural characteristics. This profile provides insights on pathways to sustainability that are both acceptable to their people and compatible with their values, traditions, institutions and ecological realities. Building on existing characteristics helps motivate and mobilise the human and physical resources of cities to achieve sustainable development and regeneration.

Principle 7

Empower people and foster participation

The journey towards sustainability requires broadly based support. Empowering people mobilises local knowledge and resources and enlists the support and active participation of all who need to be involved in all stages, from long-term planning to implementation of sustainable solutions.

People have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them. Attention needs to be given to empowering those whose voices are not always heard, such as the poor.

Principle 8

Expand and enable cooperative networks to work towards a common, sustainable future

Strengthening existing networks and establishing new cooperative networks within cities facilitate the transfer of knowledge and support continual environmental improvement. The people of cities are the key drivers for transforming cities towards sustainability. This can be achieved effectively if the people living in cities are well informed, can easily access knowledge and share learning. Furthermore, the energy and talent of people can be enhanced by people working with one another through such networks.

There is also value in cities sharing their learning with other cities, pooling resources to develop sustainability tools, and supporting and mentoring one another through inter-city and regional networks. These networks can serve as vehicles for information exchange and encouraging collective effort.

Principle 9

Promote sustainable production and consumption, through appropriate use of environmentally sound technologies and effective demand management.

A range of approaches and tools can be used to promote sustainable practices. Demand management, which includes accurate valuations of natural resources and increasing public awareness, is a valuable strategy to support sustainable consumption. This approach can also provide significant savings in infrastructure investment.

Sustainable production can be supported by the adoption and use of environmentally sound technologies that can improve environmental performance significantly. These technologies protect the environment, are less polluting, use resources in a sustainable manner, recycle more of their wastes and products and handle all residual wastes in a more environmentally acceptable way than the technologies for which they are substitutes. Environmentally sound technologies can also be used to drive reduced impacts and enhance value along a supply chain and support businesses embracing product stewardship.

Principle 10

Enable continual improvement, based on accountability, transparency and good governance

Good urban governance requires robust processes directed towards achieving the transformation of cities to sustainability through continual improvement. While in some areas gains will be incremental, there are also opportunities to make substantial improvements through innovative strategies, programmes and technologies.

To manage the continual improvement cycle, it is necessary to use relevant indicators, set targets based on benchmarks and monitor progress against milestones to achieving these targets. This facilitates progress and accountability and ensures effective implementation. Transparency and openness to scrutiny are part of good governance.

Moving towards a sustainable future

Glossary

Ecological footprint: Our ecological footprint is the impact our lifestyle has on the earth's natural resources. It is based on the area needed to grow crops, the pasture land needed to grow animal products, forest to grow timber and paper products, seas and estuaries to grow seafood and absorb pollutants, bushland to absorb carbon dioxide and land to cover the roads, buildings and dam water you use.

Local Agenda 21: Local Agenda 21 is a program that provides a framework for implementing sustainable development at the local level. It aims to build upon existing local government strategies and resources (such as Corporate plans, vegetation management plans, and transport strategies) to better integrate environmental, economic and social goals.

Stretch goals: Stretch goals are used to inspire longer-term innovation processes. They are aimed at making desirable outcomes, that are currently impossible, achievable at some future time.

Sustainability indicators: An indicator is something that helps you understand where you are, which way you are going and how far you are from where you want to be. Sustainability indicators are different from traditional indicators of economic, social, and environmental progress. Traditional indicators such as profits, asthma rates and water quality, measure changes in one part of a community as if they were entirely independent of the other parts. Sustainability indicators reflect the reality that the three different segments are very tightly interconnected.

Triple Bottom Line: The triple bottom line (TBL) focuses organisations not just on the economic value they add, but also on the environmental and social value they add—and destroy. At its narrowest, the term 'triple bottom line' is used as a framework for measuring and reporting corporate performance against economic, social and environmental parameters.

At its broadest, the term is used to capture the whole set of values, issues and processes that companies must address in order to minimise any harm resulting from their activities and to create economic, social and environmental value. This involves being clear about the organisation's purpose and taking into consideration the needs of all the organisation's stakeholders—customers, employees, partners, governments, local communities and the public (J Elkington).

Universal design: Universal design respects, values, and strives to accommodate the broadest possible spectrum of human ability in the design of all products and environments. It encompasses and goes beyond the accessible, adaptable, and barrier-free design concepts of the past. It helps eliminate the need for special features and spaces for a specific group of people, eliminating the stigma and additional expense that special products often generate. Universal design works to proactively address human needs within the mainstream.

PENRITH
CITY COUNCIL
Serving Our Community

Penrith City Council, 601 High Street, Penrith, NSW, 2750
Telephone: 4732. Website: www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au