

Port Phillip & Westernport CMA submission regarding the Draft Sustainability Fund – Priority Statement

7 December 2015

The draft Sustainability Fund Priority Statement is commendable and generally strikes an appropriate balance between specific waste management-related priorities and broader environmental sustainability-related priorities.

However, there is the opportunity to strengthen and improve the draft statement by including explicit references to relevant components of Victoria’s catchment management framework, particularly the Regional Catchment Strategies that have been developed across Victoria with extensive ownership by regional and local communities. Such references are important to enable the Sustainability Fund to better foster environmentally sustainable uses of resources and community action for climate change adaptation which are key outcomes in the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategies.

The lack of secure, dedicated, long-term funding for implementation of Regional Catchment Strategy priorities was a key recommendation identified by the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office in its 2014 assessment of the “Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities”. Since then, the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, Catchment Management Authorities and other partners have together drafted the *Our Catchments, Our Communities* strategy for Government which includes a priority action to ‘implement an investment framework for implementation of Regional Catchment Strategy priorities’. The Sustainability Fund could make an important contribution to resolving this issue so it is crucial that the Priority Statement enables and encourages this.

The following specific amendments to some sections of the draft statement are recommended in order to accommodate the comments above:

- The revenue generated from the landfill levy is allocated by ministerial determination to fund **the work of** some of our important government environmental agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority, Sustainability Victoria, ~~and~~ Victoria’s Waste and Resource Recovery Groups **and Catchment Management Authorities**.
- Victoria’s landfill levies help us to lower our impact on the environment in two ways: by encouraging people to find alternative, more innovative ways to dispose of their waste than landfill, and by providing funds to support Victorian communities, ~~and~~ businesses **and government bodies** to ~~reduce negative impacts on~~ **benefit** the environment, adapt to the future impacts of climate change through **implementation of key adaptation options**, innovation and stimulating viable industries, creating jobs for Victorians.

- For the period of this statement the strategic priorities for the Sustainability Fund are as follows, with preference given to initiatives that also foster employment, **long-term environmental legacies**, new technology and innovation, resource efficiency or ongoing behaviour change.
- Fostering ~~community~~ action or innovation **with and by communities** in relation to **environmental sustainability**, the reduction of greenhouse gas substance emissions [mitigation] or adaptation or adjustment to climate change in Victoria.
- Investment will prioritise:
 1. supporting individuals, communities and industry to transition to a low carbon economy;
 2. supporting Victorians to adapt to the impacts of climate change, particularly those most vulnerable and least able to do so; and
 3. assisting Victoria's **catchments**, ecosystems and native species to be **healthier and** more resilient to climate change and/or support mitigation outcomes.
- Investment will be guided by Victorian government policies, including the Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan, Energy Efficiency and Productivity Statement, Biodiversity Strategy, **Regional Catchment Strategies** and other relevant strategies.