



ACCI POLICY STATEMENT

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENT POLICY

ACCI recognises the importance of sustainable development which maintains the capacity of society, the economy and the environment to satisfy and sustain the needs and living standards of both current and future generations. Economic development and environmental protection are mutually reinforcing goals of sustainable development.

For industry, improving environmental performance is key to both the sustainable use of natural resources and preventing environmental damage. A dynamic and innovative industry supplying better environmental solutions is integral to the accomplishment of sustainable development.

Its accomplishment is also dependent upon a supportive government policy and regulatory framework that is conducive to sustainable development and allows consistent and realistic goals to be developed and met. Government's role is to define broad goals and priorities which encourage environmental improvement through the setting of minimum standards.

Environment policy must continue to be based on constructive dialogue between industry and government. Such policy should be based on:

- an outcome-oriented approach to government regulation which encourages technological innovation, appropriate risk management and voluntary industry approaches to best practice environmental management;
- environment standards that are appropriate to Australia's own circumstances and industrial and natural resource base; and which are nationally consistent, while recognising the role of States and Territories and variations in natural competitive advantages between regions; and
- a whole-of-government approach to policy making and implementation based on scientific assessments and maximum cooperation and consultation among government agencies and in conjunction with industry and community representatives.

ACCI will actively support efforts by government to promote sustainable development, where consistent with ACCI's environment policy position.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

ACCI supports the following specific objectives aimed at the more efficient use of energy, water and raw materials, reduction of emissions into the air, water and soil and reduction of noise impacts, reduction of waste and development of environmentally sound products and services:

- wider industry adoption of best practice environmental management including integration of environmental management practices, measurement and reporting processes into business strategies, planning and operations including a proactive role for industry associations in promulgating best practice environmental management, including the collection and sharing of information;
- encouraging environmental improvements by best practice environmental guidelines with clear performance indicators and optimal use of voluntary measures, market based incentives and minimal industry compliance costs;

- maintenance of the States/Territories' prime role in environmental regulation, with the Commonwealth principally responsible for policy coordination and leadership on issues of international or transboundary concern to all jurisdictions such as greenhouse gas emissions and consistent ambient environmental standards;
- enhancement of science-based and risk management based approaches to environmental assessment, regulation and management including objective life-cycle assessment and selection of materials and products and measures which encourage shared, rather than extended, producer responsibility; and
- government programs which promote sound science and no regrets measures leading to significant environment improvements.

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Governments should commit to best practice environmental regulation and encouragement of sustainable development by:

- allowing industry to self-regulate except when self-regulation has proven inadequate in addressing significant environmental concerns in the community and maximising non-regulatory, voluntary approaches through the use of economic instruments which should be applied in such a way as to reward success in meeting environmental standards cost-effectively while avoiding market distortions;
- encouraging industry best practice environmental management through incentives rather than punitive measures;
- ensuring a nationally consistent performance-based approach to the provision of minimum standards for water, soil and air quality;
- using technically rigorous science-based processes to assess environmental, economic and social impacts of regulatory proposals against the costs and benefits of various environmental management, regulatory and alternative options; and
- continuing to rationalise regulation and government programs on a nationally consistent basis, at the same time recognising genuine regional differences. The application of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment through National Environment Protection Measures which are adopted and implemented by each State and Territory, is a sound in - principle basis for pursuing this objective.

ACCI believes that this is the best policy framework for progressing best practice environmental regulation and management and should apply to specific environment policy elements including the following:

Climate Change

ACCI supports equitable and affordable international greenhouse gas abatement targets being set for Australia, which maintain national discretion over domestic measures. To meet the criteria for sustainable development such measures should be essentially no regrets with benefits for the economy, environment, society and industry and therefore must be sensitive to Australia's national natural, social and economic circumstances.

To the extent that current abatement targets for 2008-2012 may take Australia beyond no regrets, initiatives should be based on market mechanisms.

National Environment Protection Measures (NEPMs)

NEPMs are national standards implemented by each of the States/Territories. ACCI believes that NEPMs should be scientifically-based, nationally consistent, affordable for industry, prepared and finalised only with full participation of

industry stakeholders and subject to an impact statement.

Eco-Efficiency

ACCI supports the basic principle of eco-efficiency, which is an overarching concept for achieving environment improvements through the efficient allocation and use of resources and the reduction of waste outputs per unit of production.

Eco-efficiency actions should be transparent, cost effective, easy to implement and avoid onerous administration.

Government Support Programs

Programs should focus on no regrets and bottom line appeals to energy and other resource efficiency and related input cost reductions, process re-engineering and waste minimisation. They should especially recognise the barriers to change within sectors and individual firms.

Government programs with particular environmental objectives need to be much better coordinated, both across and within jurisdictions. For effectiveness, efficiency and compliance cost reasons, governments should seek to achieve all major environmental goals within a minimum number of government programs. For example, programs should incorporate energy and other resource use efficiency as well as waste reduction and recycling. They should avoid time consuming or human resource intensive reporting requirements.

For further information:

Greg Evans

Director, Industry Policy and Innovation

Telephone: (02) 6273 2311

Facsimile: (02) 6273 3286

Email: greg.evans@acci.asn.au