

Project Sustainability Assessment Protocol

Guidance Notes

The Vision for the City of Ryde is “an innovative City, a leader in environmental economic and social sustainability.”

In order to achieve that vision the City needs to consider the ‘environmental’, ‘governance’, ‘assets’ and ‘people’ impacts of all of its activities from the planning phase right through to implementation and ongoing management. In order to encourage project planners to take into account these aspects of their work, the City has developed a Project Sustainability Assessment Protocol.

As well as assessing the sustainability impacts of their proposals the Protocol also encourages project planners to identify opportunities for improving their sustainability performance in future activities.

These Guidance Notes have been prepared to support project planners and managers when they first begin to apply the protocol to their project plans.

If you have any questions or concerns about the protocol please contact the Manager, The Environment on ext 8263

Protocol Development

A draft Project Sustainability Assessment Protocol was developed by the environment team in early 2008.

That draft underwent a series of rigorous reviews and trials with the people who would be required to apply it including for example, engineers, planners and senior operational personnel. Feedback from this initial review led to a substantial rewriting of the Protocol.

The revised Protocol was then tested with the project managers on activities like road extensions, council events, maintenance and construction.

Feedback from this second round of trials was overwhelmingly positive. It confirmed the view that this Protocol will make a significant contribution to the development of ‘sustainability’ focussed culture at the City of Ryde.

The Protocol

A copy of the protocol is attached for your information. It is self explanatory. It asks project planners to assess their plans against Council’s four key sustainability indicators i.e. environment, people (social), governance (legal)

and assets (economic). The Protocol requires project planners to assess the impact of their project in line with the Key Outcome Areas (KOA's) identified in council's Management Plan.

From that assessment they will get an indicative sustainability "score" against each of the key indicators and a total project sustainability score.

The best thing to do is to read through a copy of the Assessment Protocol before proceeding further with these Guidance Notes. So we suggest you read it now.

Common Questions and Answers

During the review phases a number of common questions emerged. They included:

1. *Is the Assessment Protocol being used to decide whether a project should go ahead or not?*

No but if a project scores very poorly we strongly encourage the project planner to think about the aspects of their proposed activity that could be improved from a sustainability perspective.

2. *When will the Assessment Protocol be applied?*

Project planners will be required to apply the Protocol at the earliest possible stage of the project cycle. In this regard, at the 'Business Case Scenario' or at the very latest as part of the Project Management Plan stage for projects.

3. *Many of the questions require a value judgement on my part. What if my opinion is significantly different from someone else who has a look at my assessment?*

Your opinion will be different from others. You may, for example, consider an impact to be significant where someone else may consider it minor. That will be the case with most projects. The purpose of this scorecard is to try and flag issues the project planners should be thinking about when they develop their project plans and to encourage them to think about even more sustainable ways of completing their work.

If you do have a problem working out your responses during the first few uses of the protocol please give the environment team a call.

We also plan to review Assessment Protocols on a regular basis in order to encourage a more consistent approach. That review will be supported by notes to everyone who has used the protocol and everyone who is likely to use the protocol in the future.

In order to guide your assessments we have provided some sample responses from the second round of trials and the rationale for those responses in the following section of these Guidance Notes.

4. *Will there be any training to support people who now have to use the Assessment Protocol?*

There will be a one hour briefing on the protocol every quarter offered by the Environment Team. All project managers or potential project managers will be encouraged to attend that briefing before using the Assessment Protocol. They may also want to come along to subsequent briefings in order to raise any questions or concerns about the application of the protocol.

5. *How were the Key Outcome Areas (KOA's) identified.*

For the most part the KOA's are in line with those in the City's Management Plan.

6. *What is the point of the questions under the tables?*

The three questions under the tables have been designed to encourage project managers to identify:

- The benefits of the project
- The risks of not doing the project
- How the City may be able to complete the project in a more sustainable manner in the future.

Responses to these questions will provide excellent information for the City in guiding future project planning activities.

7. *My team is involved in routine maintenance activities. They do the same thing day in and day out. Surely we don't have to do one of these Assessment Protocols for every different routine maintenance job?*

No: the Protocol will be completed at the beginning of each fiscal year for routine maintenance and construction activities.

While completing that protocol project managers will be required to think of more sustainable ways of completing those routine maintenance tasks.

This does not of course take the place of environmental risk assessment those operations teams are required to complete before getting involved in any activity including daily routine maintenance and construction activities.

Indicative Responses

Outlined below are some indicative responses from the second round of trials of the Assessment Protocol. They may be useful to consider when working through the Protocol for your projects.

a) Assessed Project

Road Construction through Macquarie Park

Sustainability Indicator

Environment

KOA

“Clean air through better integrated transport systems or improved air quality emissions from specific sources”.

Score

-2

Rationale

The road will add considerably to the air pollution load in the area through the addition of more vehicles.

Although some argument could be made that improved traffic flow will reduce air quality emissions from those vehicles, it was thought that the significant increase in vehicles far outweighed the benefit of improved traffic flow from an air pollution perspective.

b) Assessed Project

Building bus shelter

Sustainability Indicator

People (social)

KOA

A vibrant city that is physical attractive

Score

-1

Rationale

Bus shelters would rarely be considered physically attractive.

c) Project

Granny Smith Festival

Indicator

Governance (legal)

KOA

"Members of the community are engaged through involvement in democratic decision making and promotion of active citizenship.

Score

+ 2

Rationale

The festival is guided by a community based steering committee and active input on the festival is sought each year through appropriate community channels.

d) Project

Council's Engagement Framework

Indicator

Assets (economic)

KOA

Well designed and maintained infrastructure that enhances quality of life.

Score

+ 1

Rationale

Through effective engagement the City will ensure infrastructure does meet the needs of the community both now and in the future.

Conclusion

The Project Sustainability Assessment Protocol is another tool that will be used by the City to encourage the development of a culture of sustainability.

The tool should provide an excellent incentive for project managers to be thinking about sustainability issues in the very early days of their project planning.

The tool is dynamic. It will be regularly reviewed. If you have any questions, concerns or suggested improvements for the protocol, please feel free to contact the Environment Team at any time.

Through working effectively together we are certain to achieve our vision of "in innovative City, a leader in environmental, economic and social sustainability".