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Background.

The Sustainability Street Approach (SSA) was devised and developed by Vox Bandicoot and is now run and managed by the not for profit Sustainability Street Institute. The SSA is described in the manual “Sustainability Street: It’s A Village Out There”. In essence, the Approach is characterised by highly local, very social, personalised and optimistic engagement with environmental sustainability. It is driven by Deep Sustainability and by Dynamic Capacity Building.*

Evaluation By Victoria University

The ‘Taking Sustainability to the Streets- Final Evaluation Report for the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA) Sustainability Street Program, 2005-2008 has been completed. This three-year independent study was undertaken by Dr Colin Hocking of Victoria University of Technology, across the 19 Sustainability Street Villages, in four Northern Melbourne municipalities, that comprise the NAGA Sustainability Street project.

The Sustainability Street Institute, is pleased to announce that the evaluation shows that **significant average sustainable living results were achieved across participant’s households ...**

- *energy use: 30-40% reduction with one particular community achieving 49%,*
- *water use: 25% reduction and*
- *waste production: 15-20% reduction from an already low base.*

In addition to these reductions, which were well in excess of municipal averages, participants also made significant contributions to biodiversity, including a three-fold increase in use of local native plants in gardens. There was a **70%** increase in the purchase of ‘small ticket’ items such as compost bins and worm farms and a **50%** increase in the purchase of ‘big-ticket’ items such as solar hot water systems, solar electricity systems (PV Cells), and energy efficient vehicles. The uptake of House insulation – Wall & Roof increased an astounding **68%**.

Community Strengthening Outcomes

As well as significant environmental outcomes, the Evaluation shows that considerable community strengthening outcomes were also achieved. Using Department of Victorian Communities, ‘Community Strengthening Indicators’, the Evaluation suggests that ... *“all of the above evidence suggests that Sustainability Street makes a significant contribution to community connectivity and resilience. There is considerable evidence, both in the specific community strength and connectivity indicators... that*

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Sustainability Street local communities of interest active, confident and resilient and levels considerably above the municipal and state-wide averages.

The Building Better Communities program objectives of assisting communities to shape their own future, encourage participation and embrace diversity, within the context of their own streets and local communities, has been well demonstrated in this project.”

Sustainability St Participants reported the following; more sharing of resources, knowledge and skills, feeling more secure, knowing peoples names, feeling more connected, feeling better about their community, and increased opportunities to socialise. They were also more engaged with other community and environmental events.

The DNA of the SSA – No Two Communities Are The Same

... celebrated US civil rights hero, Malcolm X, said “I for one believe that if you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they’ll create their own program, and when the people create a program, you get action.” The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the UNCED or so called Rio Earth Summit coined the term “capacity building” and defined it precisely in Chapters 26 and 35 of the conference proceedings ... as working together with community to mutually develop skills, knowledge and inspiration and providing resources to enable communities to create their own solutions to both present and future challenges”.

We believe the SSA fosters this “self actualisation”, self determination or transformation by fostering relevance and control. Dynamic Capacity Building and Deep Sustainability are the nourishment

** Deep Sustainability: fosters a beyond the 101 tips and the “checklist of duties” approach to understanding our lives and humanity as part of the ecology of the planet. DS includes a visceral Earth/Biodiversity focus, values clarification and applying imagination and creativity to devising solutions which are locally suited.*

** Dynamic Capacity Building: derives from developing connections and relationships with others in the community based on the recognition that we are all learners and we are all teachers ... and above all, we all have ideas! It differs from the Capacity Building which is delivered by practitioners, agents and officers. The CommUniversity is the practical manifestation of DCB. Dynamic Capacity Building is also a function of the “relevance and control” that people find in the SSA. Ultimately, a Sustainability Street Village – “is defined by and thrives according” to the ideas and energy of its participants.*