

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA TO OPEN THE 2012 SUSTAINABLE
LIVING TASMANIA FESTIVAL, PRINCE'S WHARF NO 1,
HOBART, SATURDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2012.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you this morning and to see so many people just bursting to get into this 40th anniversary Sustainable Living Tasmania Festival.

According to the United States Environment Protection Agency:

Sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

Sustainability is important to making sure that we have and will continue to have, the water, materials, and resources to protect human health and our environment.¹

Living sustainably requires us to think globally and act locally and Sustainable Living Tasmania has been doing that very successfully for 40 years now. Sustainable Living Tasmania has its origins in the flooding of Lake Pedder in 1972, an exquisite jewel in

¹ <http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/basicinfo.htm> accessed 2nd November 2012

the wilderness named after the first Chief Justice of this State. The country-wide and international opposition to the flooding of Lake Pedder raised the consciousness of the importance of balancing the demands of progress with protection of the environment to ensure that developments are both necessary and sustainable. Here in Tasmania that raised level of awareness led to the opening on 7th December 1972 of the Tasmanian Environment Centre. Forty years on that educational and advisory centre is still going strong.

The focus for this year's Expo, now re-badged as the Sustainable Living Tasmania Festival is Food and it is appropriately themed "Food for thought." With respect to this aspect of living sustainably it has been said:²

"Although the most sustainable food production is that done on-premises, very few people have enough land and resources to accomplish the task alone. Growing all of the fruits, vegetables, and grains and raising the livestock to accommodate a wholesome, nutritious diet is next to impossible for most people. The next best thing is buying local foods from organic and sustainable farms. Buying local foods drastically reduces the carbon footprint created through transportation and distribution. In general, local small-scale farms use more sustainable food production methods because their

² <http://www.sustainableliving.com.au/food> accessed 2nd November 2012

client-base is seeking quality over quantity. In addition, there is no carbon footprint and waste from packaging materials.”

Although I think that most people would agree with that assertion with respect to food sustainability, it's not easy to buy locally, especially for a family with two or three children and both parents working. The fact is that in today's Australia, most of our food is retailed through two giant supermarket companies and the ease of shopping in one place with your car just outside is hard to resist and makes it easy to put out of mind the carbon footprint created by those huge trucks that bring the food to the supermarkets, not to mention the carbon footprint created by those food products that come from overseas.

But even large multi-national supermarkets are getting the message and are becoming increasingly responsive to the growing demands and expectations of their customers, to supply sustainable foods and products. Some may be skeptical and regard their endeavours as merely token efforts, but it is no coincidence that both companies now promote their commitment to ethical sourcing, animal welfare and seafood sustainability.

So as the saying goes, where there is a will there is a way and from my limited experience specialty food shops that sell locally organically grown food seem to be doing very well. I suspect that in large measure it might be a question of customers keeping the

pressure on the two supermarkets to source and retail local foods from organic and sustainable farms. In this context demand almost always produces a supply. I appreciate that, at least initially, satisfying the demand may come at a cost, but if changed attitudes increase the demand it is likely that the cost will come down. I know that in the United Kingdom many of the large supermarkets have large sections of fresh organically grown food, although I accept that the size of the market over there is much bigger than it is in Tasmania.

However, changing cultural attitudes towards sustainability is what Sustainable Living Tasmania has been doing very well for 40 years now. Education has been to the forefront of its work since its inception, and during that time a library of resource material has been built up to demonstrate the viability of living sustainably and importantly, so that what each of us in Tasmania do does make a difference globally.

There is plenty of evidence that the culture of our society with respect to sustainability issues is quite different from what it was in the days of the flooding in Lake Pedder and the damming of the Franklin River. I remember it all very well for I was one of the counsel retained by the Commonwealth in the High Court for the Tasmanian Dams case and some people that I had known for years who I thought were my friends refused to speak to me in the street because anti-green or anti-sustainability feeling was so strong. But

these days environmental impact statements are the norm for almost all developments and support for sustainability is widespread. Look at the number of people who have turned out for this Festival and who have turned out for previous expos - there is a thirst for knowledge about sustainability and Sustainable Living Tasmania has been slaking that thirst for 40 years now. I congratulate all those involved, especially the many volunteers, for drip by drip, you have helped to generate a wave of sustainable change in this beautiful island State.

As it says on your web site:³

“Sustainable Living Tasmania shows every day that:

- Tasmanians do care about each other
- Individuals can make a difference
- We can create strong, resilient communities
- Change can be pleasant and enjoyable.

SLT has proved this and intends to continue proving it until what we're calling Sustainable becomes known as Normal.”

I think that what you call sustainable is now widely regarded as normal. As I said, the interest and following of this annual festival, which I now declare open, is clear evidence to support that.

³ <http://www.sustainablelivingtasmania.org.au/about/history> accessed 4th November 2012.

