

Australia's sustainability guide a world first

The port sustainability strategy development guide recently released by Ports Australia makes business sense, writes Jason Sprott

ADOPTING A SUSTAINABLE

mindset in corporate governance is critical for business success. Across the globe, it has been pleasing to witness the acceleration of sustainability endeavors in recent years, with a wide range of sectors taking determined action - both in the private and public domains.

In 2015, Australia became a signatory to the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by all United Nations member states, which provides a common global sustainability framework. At its core are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which call for urgent action and a renewed "global partnership".

SUSTAINABILITY MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

Progressive businesses realise the need to ensure a balanced approach to corporate governance and the long-term and enduring benefits that will come from such an approach. Stakeholders, financial investors and employees (of all generations) are increasingly demanding meaningful action.

Clearly, as the industry involved in moving the majority of trade across the world's oceans, the global port sector has a role to play in advancing sustainability.

The International Maritime Organization, being part of the UN Family, is actively working towards the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the associated SDGs.

The World Port Sustainability Program established under IAPH framework in 2017, is the global port sector entity that is shaping a sectorial response through proactive collaboration, detailed technical work and industry expertise.

The WPSM builds on the *World Ports Climate Initiative* initiated by the IAPH in 2008. The program seeks to empower the port community worldwide to engage with business, governmental and societal

stakeholders in creating "sustainable added value for the local communities and wider regions in which their ports are embedded".

TAKING ACTION

Closer to home, Ports Australia recognised the need to provide consistent and consolidated industry direction. The approach was based on the desire for ports to have industry support and access to robust, value-adding information.

In 2019, Ports Australia released *Ports and a Sustainable Australia*, a document that demonstrated the sector's support for the WPSM program and the UN SDG framework. It enabled Australian ports to showcase their current sustainability work - in essence raising the flag that sustainability in Australian ports is not something new, but rather an approach that was already at play, albeit at differing degrees of maturity across the nation.

Ports Australia's recent release of the *Leading Practice: Port Sustainability Strategy Development Guide* represents a consolidated technical guide for Australian, and indeed global, ports looking to develop meaningful whole-of-business sustainability strategies.

Recognising that sustainability must be based on a strategy or plan, rather than ad-hoc and periodic reporting, Ports Australia has outlined a robust and systematic approach to strategy development.

Developed by the Ports Australia Sustainability Working Group with advisory and operational experience from our practice, the guide is a world-first.

FOUR-STEP METHODOLOGY

Leading Practice: Port Sustainability Strategy Development Guide details a four-step approach to strategy development, including detailed materiality assessments as part of the process. It provides detailed information and recommended inclusions and considerations for each stage -



Jason Sprott, owner and director, Sprott Planning & Environment

including the UN SDG framework which is central in the methodology, ensuring a balanced consideration of key issues.

This flexible approach, able to be right-sized for any port, has already been used and proven at Australia and New Zealand ports, and tested at the World Greenport Conference in Oslo in 2019.

Mike Gallacher, CEO of Ports Australia, commented upon the release of the guide, "We recognise that sustainability, just like the ports sector, is unique. There is no one size that fits all, which is why this guide had to be made adaptable to suit any port wanting to future-proof their business".

We look forward to industry taking action and using the guide as it develops sustainability strategies, which in our view will add significant value to their business, their stakeholders and the environment.

Importantly, through the Ports Australia Sustainability Working Group, the sector will be able to collaborate, share lessons learned and assess emerging approaches as we advance as an industry and collectively create a more sustainable future. ■