

Environment Protection Authority

EPA Board Summit 2016 summary report

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1 Executive summary

The EPA Board holds an annual summit to assist the EPA, the Board and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation assess the views of interested bodies on matters related to the operation of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (EP Act) and protection of the environment.

For a number of years, the EPA Board has determined to go well beyond complying with the legislative requirement outlined in section 19 of the EP Act and seek to actively engage throughout the year with a variety of industry and community sectors in both the metropolitan and regional areas. This year, the Board will host multiple events to undertake targeted consultation with specific industry and community sectors. The summit was the first of these events.

This report summarises the proceedings of the EPA Board Summit held on Wednesday, 27 April 2016 with a specific focus on the EPA's interactions with small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Given the significant challenges facing SA in transforming the economy, the format and focus of the event was designed to provide an opportunity to consider how the EPA can assist SMEs in developing practical solutions to build capacity and capability, and assist them in meeting and understanding their environmental management obligations. A total of 34 delegates attended the summit representing a cross-section of business, industry, government and non-government sectors.

Proceedings were officially opened by EPA Board Presiding Member Linda Bowes who also took the opportunity to launch Volume II of the *Good for Environment, Good for Business* publication. The case studies in this brochure represent just some of the small-to-medium businesses that have made their own contributions towards sustainable improvements to the environment, and they are among the 2,200 South Australian companies licensed by the EPA.

This year, for the first time, the concept of a panel discussion was introduced, led by EPA Chief Executive Tony Circelli. Mr Circelli hosted the session with Hanson's Operations Manager Kelly Manning, and Tarac Technologies' Environmental & Strategic Business Development Manager Mark Anderson who outlined some of the key challenges facing their businesses.

Achieving a balance between environmental outcomes and desired economic and social benefits is a challenge that is constantly faced by business and industry, and the EPA's role in educating and informing industry is seen to be of pivotal importance. Attendees welcomed the opportunity to hear from their peers about how they achieve the balance between good regulation being good for their business and also good for the community.

Discussion during the workshop session highlighted a number of key themes. The concept of finding ways to encourage innovation and reward positive performers through an Awards program is a matter that the EPA is currently responding to. This year the EPA will sponsor an award in the Water Industry Alliance 2016 Smart Water Awards for the first time, as well as an Environment Award in the Business SA Export Awards.

The EPA is also increasing its presence at industry events, working closely with the Small Business Commissioner and endeavouring to engage with SMEs face to face on a more regular basis. The EPA understands that SMEs are short on resources and that helping them to be clear about their environmental requirements and playing the role of the enabler as well as the regulator is what they want.

The EPA also recognises the role it can play in assisting SMEs build capacity and capability within their organisations. This particularly relates to community engagement at a time of changing landscapes with industry and society now residing closer together. This will be a primary focus for the EPA this year.

2 Opening address

EPA Board Presiding Member Linda Bowes officially opened the summit and outlined the purpose of the event and the Board's objectives.

She spoke about the focus on how the EPA can better work with SMEs for mutual benefit and outcomes, noting that SMEs have always been the backbone of South Australia and were increasingly important with the changing structure of SA's economy.

"For many SMEs, the market dynamics of the particular sector are changing, products, services and customer bases are shifting, sometimes transforming, sometimes disappearing all together. However, we are seeing exciting innovation, ingenuity and energy arising from SMEs as they respond to these challenges with determination and resilience."

Over the past 20 years, the EPA has learnt that environmental regulation can help business not only improve environmental performance but in so doing improve their bottom line as well.

This sentiment is echoed by many economic analysts and experts. Commitment to better environmental performance can be used to reduce risk, improve efficiency, drive innovation, build intangible value and often deliver increased revenue and profit. It also allows these businesses to play an important role in determining the state of the environment we will leave for future generations.

What the EPA hears from the business sector, is that it needs to do more to recognise and celebrate businesses who achieve outstanding performance, that it must come down hard on those who choose to take chances with the environment or try and gain an unfair advantage by dodging their obligations, and that it needs to do more to support those who are trying really hard to do the right thing but struggling for one reason or another.

The EPA looks forward to working with participants, using collective wisdom, sharing ideas and experiences to find answers that will make a positive difference for businesses and for the environment.

3 Workshop

The workshop provided an opportunity for delegates to have a more detailed table discussion around two key questions.

- 1 What are the roadblocks and impediments to managing environmental issues in your business?
- 2 What are the things the EPA could do to drive more business innovation and sustainable practices?

A mix of industry and government delegates were seated at six tables with a Board member plus a senior EPA staff member who was responsible for recording the key points discussed.

One of the important elements of the workshop was the opportunity for each table to report back allowing an interchange of ideas amongst all attendees.

There were some key themes that came from the discussions and these are the areas that the EPA will now give further consideration.

We heard you tell us that:

- A level playing field is important; and that those businesses that do not comply should be penalised.
- Regulatory certainty to allow investment in new systems to improve performance is important and regulation needs to change the individual business purpose. The EPA is in a unique position to know the problems of a particular sector and understand its impact from aggregated data. If 10 companies have a similar issue, then getting them together could result in collectively understanding an issue, innovate around a solution and share costs.
- SMEs don't have access to or can't afford trend data.
- The EPA should work more with businesses in an advisory capacity to improve business capability. This could also include the provision of standard tools to assist businesses to avoid unnecessary consultancy costs.
- Investment for environmental improvements can be a big decision. The financial capacity of SMEs was discussed, noting that financial incentives and assistance such as technology, tax relief and grant programs were of critical importance to SMEs.
- Using a term such as 'summit' for SMEs is not appropriate as it implied a large number of attendees and the impression that representatives may have to speak up in front of everyone. We also heard that the 'bring a buddy' concept was worth exploring.

4 Next steps

Chief Executive Tony Circelli thanked guests for their participation. In summary, he noted that the EPA is in a unique position to see first-hand how innovation and excellent outcomes often arise from difficult circumstances. There are many examples of businesses who have faced environmental problems, or who have sought to lower their environmental footprint through reducing waste water discharges or air emissions, and using those challenges to invest and drive innovation. This has led to them seeking further opportunities and innovation, including building stronger and more robust relationships with their local communities, and growing a more sustainable business.

The EPA's role is fundamental in sustaining and where possible, improving the wellbeing and prosperity of the community. Much of our success relies on the partnerships forged between communities, business and industry groups, and all sectors of government.

We have listened to you today, we have updated you on some of the initiatives we have already commenced which were the subject of some discussion today. We have take on board your feedback on other initiatives that are considered important to you.

We have identified that as a first step we will undertake the following and report back to attendees by May 2017:

- Investigate a pilot project with an industry specific cluster to look at ways in which the EPA can better work with sectors to improve their capability and capacity to meet environmental obligations and support innovation.
- Develop an online toolkit for businesses to independently determine whether they require an EPA licence.
- Develop a program to highlight the various 'stories' of SMEs in the EPA Monitor newsletter.

Closing remarks

The Hon Ian Hunter MLC, Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation provided closing remarks, thanking delegates for their contribution and recognising the important role SMEs have in the transformation of the SA economy.

The EPA Board would like to thank all attendees for their valuable insight and participation at the event.

Appendix 1 Delegates

First name	Last name	Organisation
George	Bolton	Boating Industry Association
Mark	Anderson	Tarac Technologies
Brett	Brown	Southern Quarries
Graham	Burch	Kimberly–Clark
Graham	Chandler	Princess Royal
John	Chapman	Small Business Commissioner
Andrew	Chapman	The Marina Hindmarsh Island
Tom	Clark	Workspace
Robran	Cock	Trility
Duncan	Cogswell	Borehole Wireline
Ben	Dearman	McMahon Services
Keith	George	Hanson (Marlestone)
Mandy	Gerhardy	Bickfords
Jeremy	Hawkes	Bowhill Engineering
Paul	Haysman	Jeffries Group
Mike	Haywood	Waste Industry
John	Ide	Yalumba Wine Company
Stuart	Lowe	Mayne Pharma International Pharmaceuticals
Kelly	Manning	Hanson (Golden Grove Quarry)
Tracey	Manser	Adelaide Galvanising Industries
Andrew	McKenna	Business SA
Tyson	Miller	Simpler Regulation Unit
Ian	Nightingale	Industry Participation Advocate
Antonio	Palmieri	Boral Clay & Concrete
John	Phillips	KESAB
Paul	Rasmussen	Sundrop Farms
Tennant	Reed	Australian Industry Group
Andy	Roberts	Water Industry Alliance
Stephen	Smith	Local Government Association
Matthew	Van Schaik	Bio Gro
Jon	Varcoe	Tonkin Consulting
Phil	Warren	Gridlock Civil
Geoff	Webster	Waste Management Association of Australia
Craig	Wilkins	Conservation Council

EPA representatives

First name	Last name	Organisation
Ros	Agate	Director Strategy and Business
Keith	Baldry	Operations Director, Mining, Radiation and Regulatory Support
Linda	Bowes	Presiding Member
Tony	Circelli	Chief Executive
Melinda	Clarke	Manager, Communications and Executive Office
Ros	DeGaris	Board Member
Peter	Dolan	Operations Director, Science, Assessment and Planning
Rob	Fowler	Board Member
Tobias	Hills	Manager, Policy and Better Regulation
Allan	Holmes	Board Member
Helen	Macdonald	Board Member
Hannah	Pitcher	Executive Officer
Peter	Scott	Principal Adviser
Christine	Trenorden	Board Member
Greg	Tyczenko	Manager, Resources and Energy
Mark	Withers	Board Member
Andrew	Wood	Executive Director, Operations