

Planning for a COVID-19 Future: Resilience
Part 3 ~ Recovery from the Pandemic
Co-Existence and Sustainable Development

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Disclosure Statement

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In 2020 the World Health Organization expressed the view that any goal to **eliminate and eradicate the number of COVID-19 infections** was unrealistic.

In 2021, it also seems unrealistic to hope that the world can rid itself of the COVID-19 virus, based on having an effective vaccine.

Instead, the more likely global position will be for the virus that causes **COVID-19 to become endemic**: That is, the virus will continue to circulate in pockets of the global population for years to come.

So, to achieve resilience, any plan by Government to recover from the global pandemic must focus on a future in which it may be improbable to reduce COVID-19 health risks to a zero level.

*Co-existence with COVID-19
should be seen as the norm
for planning for a resilient society.*

As the global health impacts of the global pandemic become effectively managed through preventative actions and measures taken by Government, increasing attention by national Governments will have to be directed at the recovery phase from the pandemic.

Recovery from the pandemic needs to be seen as a classic sustainable development problem for Government to resolve.

A **YouGov poll** undertaken nationally for News Corp in August 2021, highlighted some of the current concerns Australians have following restrictions imposed in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic: -

Closure of businesses and unemployment, mental health, persistence of infection and mortality in the community, social isolation - through to negative long-term effects on children's education.

The poll provides a window into understanding the political pressures for the challenge that lies ahead for Government: -

*How to effectively balance
COVID-19 health risk considerations
against the adverse economic, social, and cultural impacts and inequalities
that have emerged from the response to the pandemic.*

This challenge resonates with what is probably the most well-known and generally accepted Guiding Principle for achieving sustainable development: -

“Decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations”.

These multiple, competing considerations need to be balanced equitably and to not be weighted in favour of one!

Equity is an accepted, key element for achieving sustainable development. It aims to minimize the extent to which costs and benefits - in the case of recovery from COVID-19 - are shared disproportionately between all sectors of society as well as between generations.

For Australia, decision-makers should also be mindful to ensure that another of the Guiding Principles for sustainable development – endorsed by all levels of government in Australia by a landmark national environmental policy – is effectively applied during the recovery phase for COVID-19: -

*“Decisions and actions
should provide for broad community involvement
on issues which affect them.”*

Or, as the outcome document of the [United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development](#) (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2012) “The Future We Want” concluded, in reinforcing the original *UN Agenda 21 Sustainable Development Plan of Action (1992)* : -

That “opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental for sustainable development” (para. 14).

Finding sustainable solutions for the recovery phase from the COVID-19 pandemic will also require national Governments to decide on an appropriate methodology for them to adopt.

Consideration should be given by Government for adopting **multi-objective analysis** as a decision-making aid for finding sustainable solutions. It is a well-accepted, cross-disciplinary procedure for resolving public-sector problems involving multiple and competing objectives — whether in environmental policy, water resources, energy, or public health.

Conflict Management: Sustainable Development and Public Participation

A problem-solving pathway which recognizes that sustainable development and public participation are interdependent and mutually supporting should form the framework for Governments to engage the public effectively in order to find sustainable solutions for the recovery phase of the pandemic. Y

*Some of the adverse impacts and inequalities
in Australia’s response to COVID-19
that exist today were reasonably foreseeable.*

Some may be unintended outcomes.

*Overall, there will be no short-term fix
as a long-term solution seems inevitable.*

Solution costs that may well impact on future generations.

*Sustainable solutions should minimize the extent to which costs and
benefits are shared disproportionately between generations.*

A good **example** of how sustainable development and public participation are interdependent and mutually supporting is the Aarhus Convention, which ‘empower[s] people with the rights to access

information, participate in decision-making in environmental matters and to seek justice.' It also **provides** a 'solid framework for governments to engage the public effectively in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals]'.

A priority for decision-makers during the recovery phase from the pandemic must be the need for sustainable solutions to resonate with the principle of intergenerational equity – a concept of fairness between generations.

The principle is the foundation for sustainable development.

Any failure to effectively address the needs for inter-generational equity and sustainable development may well raise the claim that a Marxian philosophy prevailed for decision-making in the recovery phase from the COVID-19 pandemic; and when it came to repay future costs associated with restrictive actions and measures imposed during the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The reason? The following statement loosely attributed to **Marx**: -

***“Why should I care about future generations –
What have they ever done for me?”***

TAGS: COVID-19; resilience; recovery; impacts – public health, economics, social, cultural; inter-generational equity; sustainable development; methodology - multi-objective analysis; public participation.