

TIME FOR A CHECK-UP?

Thanks to AGIC's Quick Check you can get a read on your project's sustainability standing in a heartbeat. By Richard Collins.

The Australian Green Infrastructure Council (AGIC) has just released its first offering, a down payment on the comprehensive sustainability rating scheme for infrastructure it's developing after winning long-awaited federal funding. 'Quick Check' is an automated tool that guides users through 136 considerations for incorporating sustainability into their infrastructure projects.

The streamlined template is a bridge to the formal ratings scheme, helping members plan ahead by highlighting numerous possible sustainability inclusions for projects, such as the use of lifecycle costing, enhancing habitat and creating legacy projects for communities.

Quick Check is only available to AGIC members, through the website (others may be able to access it by working with existing members), but it is a signpost of the new thinking in leading firms and perhaps an inducement for the long tail of firms in the sector that are yet to grapple with sustainability.

Developed by AECOM's Scott Losee as part of the company's contribution towards foundation membership, it uses

the early thinking established by AGIC and its seven headline categories: Project management & Governance, Economic performance, Using resources, Emissions, Pollution & Waste, Biodiversity, People & Place, and Workforce.

According to Losee, AECOM's sustainability and climate change practice leader, the easy-to-use tool allows a project manager or sustainability practitioner to

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 – Scott Losee, AECOM

quickly evaluate how sustainability can be incorporated into the project scope or to gauge environmental performance throughout any project phase.

"It actually only takes an hour interview with a sustainability practitioner and one or two people with in-depth knowledge of the project to generate a Quick Check report," he said.

The Excel spreadsheet-based system allows users to easily create a PDF of the output report to circulate to team members, project leadership or clients and owners. This can be done at key stages periodically to track the status of sustainability on the project and align the project for a good AGIC rating scheme once the fully-fledged scheme is introduced.

Embedding transparent sustainability
 As part of its development of Quick Check, AECOM applied the considerations to 20 projects at various stages of development throughout Australia.

One project that performed well was a current busway AECOM has been involved with in Brisbane. Now in the construction phase, sustainability thinking was embedded at the beginning of the design process.

"Even though a busway can be considered 'sustainable' in the sense that it enhances public transport, the development can claim to be applying sustainability unless it looks at the development holistically," said Losee.

Part of the success of embedding

sustainability into the busway project was through the systems put in place at the beginning. Team members were specifically assigned to drive sustainability, from the sustainability procurement plan to a sustainability key result area and measureable key performance indicators. The decision-making process also built in sustainability considerations in a transparent and accountable way.

Some of the specific measures included a climate change risk workshop and adaptation planning, formal attention to innovation capture and implementation, and a change management approach to promoting awareness, knowledge, commitment and action across the wider team.

The Quick Check review of the busway project found 77 per cent of the items could be ticked. The project was strong across five of the seven AGIC categories; for example, achieving 93 per cent for Economic Performance and 86 per cent for the Using Resources category.

The weakest category in this case was

FACT FILE: AGIC'S NEW MAGIC

At AGIC's inaugural conference next month it will be unveiling the first completed part of its rating scheme, a world-first checklist on infrastructure's climate change vulnerability.

It's not the formal rating component, but a working document that includes a checklist of issues, lays out protocols and procedures, and points to further references.

GHD's Antony Sprigg said it focused not just on the design and construction phases, but operational plans too. "We've laid out the technical requirements of climate change, but also how to embed reassessment of climate change when you look at management procedures every three to five years."

This could mean reassessing drainage and heat stress, for example, or building in resilience as part of the asset replacement cycle.

biodiversity, which related in part to the urban location and limited opportunities for positive biodiversity outcomes.

The busway project included some early successes such as the removal and re-use of houses in the alignment, instead of demolition, and the re-use of a pedestrian bridge structure.

The AECOM review of projects revealed a large variance in sustainability performance, as judged by Quick Check. In a few cases, the projects had limited opportunities to promote sustainability but, for the most part, the difference

had to do with the level of interest and understanding by the project staff.

"From this review of [20] diverse infrastructure projects, it was clear that Quick Check offered a powerful way to help project managers to get their heads around what sustainability meant in a project context," Losee said.

He also said the key to applying sustainability in large-scale infrastructure projects was fundamentally about the ability

to influence people.

"A good sustainability practitioner takes people out of their comfort zone, ruffles their feathers, steps on their toes, gets in their faces, but leaves behind an indelible impression that sustainability is practical, achievable, valuable and necessary."

Quick Check's list of considerations makes sustainability tangible and provides a range of practical matters for project managers to contemplate incorporating in their project scopes.

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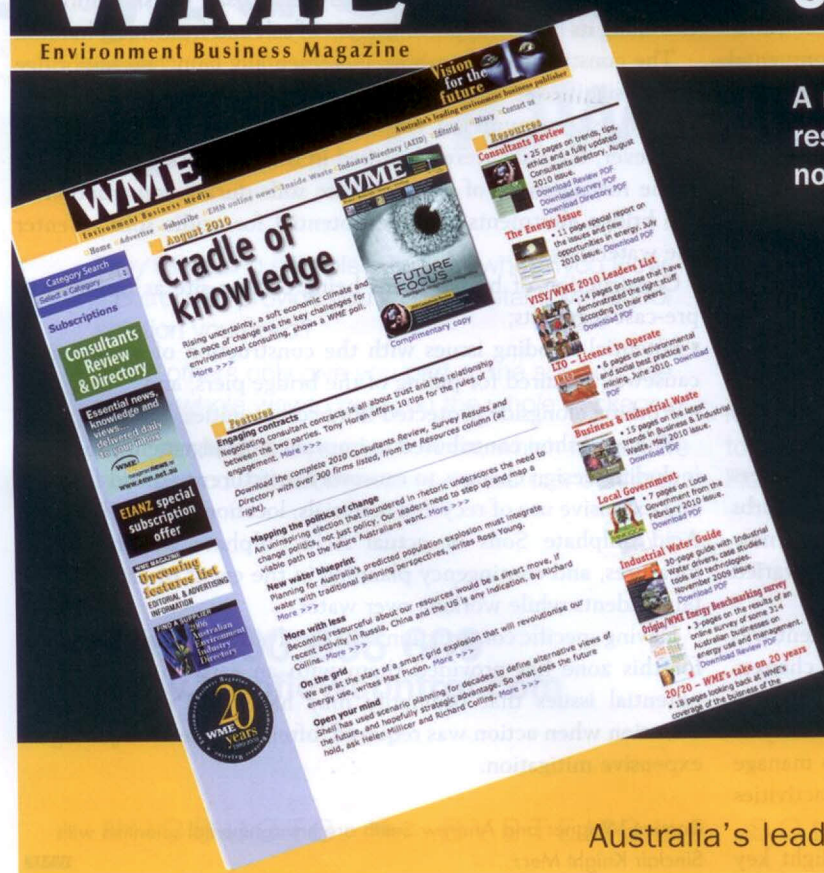
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