

THE LANDCOM GUIDELINES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

KEYNOTES ADDRESS BY DR KEITH SUTER

THE REVOLUTION OF RISING EXPECTATIONS

1. Reinvention of Human Agency

- Traditional view was that of the human as the passive consumer of government services: “authorities know best”; “doctor as god”; a dying patient may not have been informed of what was happening to them; “stolen children” removed for their own benefit.
- Now there is a changed assumption of what humans are like: agents of their own destiny: human potential movement (as illustrated by the “self-improvement” books), reduced respect for institutions; decline in organized religion (with an increase in New Age individualized behaviour – “what works for me”).

2. The Power of Consumers

- 1777: Adam Smith making a virtue out of individualism and economic growth.
- People want greater freedom of choice (democracy, consumer goods, building design).
- Customers have increasingly higher expectations.

3. Case Study: “The Experience Economy” (Joseph Pine and James Gilmore)

- Old era: three layers of economic activity: (i) commodities (ii) goods (iii) services.
- People now have so much wealth that we need to find new ways of extracting money from them.
- New era: four layers of economic activity: (i) commodities (ii) goods (iii) services (iv) experience.
- Experiences are memorable (rather than tangible).
- Luxury pens write just like ordinary Birs, but they create a “writing experience” to demonstrate that the owner has wealth.
- McDonalds do not just sell fast food; they sell bright, clean, safe and family-friendly eating places for socializing.
- Starbucks Coffee Company sells more than coffee.
- Bookshops that sell coffee: just what are they selling? (Romance).

THE “SUSTAINABILITY” REVOLUTION

4. Buildings in the Front Line

- UN Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (May 2007)
- Buildings are one of the main sources of climate change: about 30 per cent (and second only to industry).
- Buildings are also able to provide some of the most dramatic cuts in greenhouse gases (GHG).
- New buildings in Australia are often quite good – greater problem is with the existing stock.
- The building industry may have the qualifications and skills to do the work – it is more a matter of stimulating demand for change from owners/renters/users.

5. 21st Century: “The Century of the Environment”

- The Club of Rome: 20th Century: “century of economics”; 21st Century: “century of the environment”: environmental problems will force themselves upon us.
- Climate change as an issue is becoming self-sustaining; there may be periodic reductions in political salience but climate change will remain on the political radar screen: too many people now have too many interests in it and the issue itself is too big simply to be solved by a few immediate legislative changes.

6. Climate Change as a Political Issue

- “Climate security” is an international political issue (it was the subject of a UN Security Council meeting in April 2007) [if you want government action add “security to our noun e.g. “water security”!]
- Environment issues have become mainstream: middle-class, middle-aged and middle of the road (and no longer a fringe matter for “greenies”).

7. The Environment in the Political Issue Cycle

- The environment as an issue will rise and fall.
- But note the “ratchet effect” (like a set of stairs): the pendulum never completely retraces its arc: even as the salience erodes, the legislative and administrative changes that have been implemented often remain in place for when the next bout of urgency occurs.
- NGOs (non-governmental organizations) drive the issue; the media respond; governmental action lags but lasts; business looks for opportunities.
- Climate change is now more a matter of media-driven politics than science.
- The issue will remain “salient” because of the steady trickle of new angles: e.g. gradual loss of low-lying islands and creation of “environmental refugees”, melting of the Polar ice caps, loss of biodiversity, flora and fauna, increasing droughts and famines.

8. Green is the New Black

- Business now sees opportunities in being green and so will keep the momentum going.
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- Young potential Australian staff members want to work for “green” companies/organizations; they will (if necessary) force culture changes: with high employment rates they can afford to be choosy; they want to work for companies/organizations that match their values; they want to be part of a company/organization they can feel proud of telling their friends about.

9. Being Green as a Way of Life

- You don’t think your way through to a new way of living – you live your way through a new way of thinking.
- The looming oil crisis will encourage a rediscovery of the sense of community.