Policy Life Cycle Analysis of Three Australian State-level Public Policies: Exploring the Political Dimension of Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This article analyses the life cycle of three Australian public policies (Tasmania Together [TT], South Australia's Strategic Plan [SASP,] and Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy [WA's SSS]). These policies were formulated at the state level and were structured around sustainable development concepts (the environmental, economic, and social dimensions). This study highlights contexts that led to the making of these public policies, as well as factors that led to their discontinuation. The case studies are based on analysis of parliamentary debates, state governments' budget reports, public agencies' annual reports, government media releases, and stakeholders' feedback. The empirical findings highlight the importance of understanding the political dimension of sustainable development. This fact highlights the need to look beyond the traditional three-dimensional view of sustainability when assessing the success (or lack thereof) of sustainable development policies. Equally important, the analysis indicates that despite these policies' limited success (and even one of these policies not being implemented at all), sustainability policies can have a legacy beyond their life cycle. Hence, the evaluation of these policies is likely to provide insight into the process of policymaking.

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Introduction

Every public policy tries to set out a new norms and value system. The public become aware of the upcoming new public policy or scheme set out by their government for implementation, through the government's press releases, television, or newspaper articles. However, the question is: 'where does the initial idea come from?'; 'who had the idea in the first place?'; 'why has the agenda become politically important?'; and 'how has the agenda suddenly lost its political relevance?' This article explores these questions through the process of analysing the life cycle of three Australian state-level policies Tasmania Together (TT), South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) and Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy (WA's SSS).

In Australia, from 1998 until the first half of the 2000s, all Labor-governed states adopted a strategic plan or strategy based on sustainable development values. The sustainable development concept is often explained from the triple bottom line perspective, which combines environmental, economic, and social dimensions. However, to advance the sustainable development agenda, there is also a need to understand the political dimensions of sustainable development (O'Connor, 2006). The value systems underpinning sustainable development policies are, typically, an amalgamation of 'hard facts' regarding economic, social, and environmental dimensions and societal 'gut feelings' that represent a sense of responsibility for acting on environmental degradation. In addition to these facts, desires of politicians and policymakers to make a mark in the sustainability policy area and to leave a legacy are also important factors. Hence, the success of a sustainable development policy lies in its ability to mix and match these often-competing factors. Having said that, even if a policy succeeds in finding an optimal way to satisfy 'hard facts', societal desires, and politicians' ambitions, it has its own shelf life. Thus, the real challenge for a sustainable development policy (and, for that matter, any public policy) lies in whether it can have a legacy after its shelf life.

This article examines the life cycle of three overarching sustainable development policies of the early 2000s: TT, SASP, and WA's SSS. In addition, it also briefly highlights the nature of the legacies these policies have left behind from a stakeholders' perspective.

State Strategic Planning in the International Context

Over the years, the sustainable development concept has been disseminated and accepted in many jurisdictions, at national, sub-national, and local levels (Quental

& Lourenço, 2012). This study contributes to the literature that focuses on sustainable development policies at the sub-national level jurisdictions falling between national and local levels of government (Marks et al., 2008). In the conventional three-tier democratic political structure as observed in many countries around the globe, the sub-national jurisdiction (usually called a state, province or canton) is responsible for implementing a range of policies. This level of government often plays an important role in the development and implementation of sustainable development policies; for example, since the late 1980s, several US state governments and other sub-national jurisdictions have launched state-based strategic planning with holistic sustainability (economic–social–environmental) targets and benchmarks to guide public policies (Happaerts, 2012; Schumacher Center for a New Economics, 2012). However, the specific content of sustainable development policies is found to be strongly dependent on domestic conditions (Happaerts, 2012; Happaerts & Van Den Brande, 2011).

Happaerts and Van Den Brande (2011) have pointed out that major global summits on sustainable development, such as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the Earth Summit in Johannesburg in 2002 that followed from the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987, had an immense influence on the dissemination of sustainability values. In particular, the message expressed at these summits that sustainable development is not necessarily a national government's issue. Rather it also has to resonate well with local and sub-national governments. Over the years, sub-national governments have shown a desire to participate in (international) sustainable development policy and governance, as it is evidenced by both their 'on the ground policies' and their participation in transnational sustainable development and climate change governance networks (Happaerts & Van Den Brande, 2011). Having said that, not all sustainable development activities of sub-national governments can be explained by a 'voluntary' eagerness to do good (or to do better than their national context): national governments often mandate sub-national governments to develop, implement, and monitor the performance of sustainable development policies.

State Strategic Planning in the Australian Sub-national Context

Since the 1980s, public sector policymaking in Australia has been guided by the New Public Management (NPM) philosophy (Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013; Johnston, 2000). However, as the Labor Party came to power in most of the Australian states in the late 1990s or early 2000s, the narrow focus of an 'agency-centric' effectiveness approach was replaced by 'whole-of-government' strategic planning processes centred around sustainable development or holistic sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) values (Considine et al., 2014; Gallop, 2007b; Johnston, 2000). With the change in perspective towards public governance, many Australian state governments embraced strategic planning and incorporated holistic sustainability values or the triple bottom line approach as their core values (Gallop, 2007a, 2007b).

The process started in Queensland with the adoption of the Smart State Plan in 1988 by the Beattie government (Althaus, 2008; Tagliaferri, 2011). In 2001, the Bracks and the Bacon governments launched Growing Victoria Together and TT in Victoria and Tasmania, respectively (Althaus, 2008; Tagliaferri, 2011). In 2004, SASP was adopted by the Rann government. In Western Australia, Better Planning: Better Services and the State Sustainability Strategy were launched by the Gallop government in 2003 (Martin & Christof, 2011; Tagliaferri, 2011; van Schoubroeck, 2010). Finally, in New South Wales, A New Direction for the Future was implemented in 2006 by the Iemma government (Gallop, 2007b; Tagliaferri, 2011).

Previous studies on these state-level strategic plans, concentrated on the different perspectives, are briefly summarised below.

- Adams and Wiseman (2003) provided an insider's perspective on why Growing Victoria Together was undertaken by the Victorian Labor government. The authors noted that the formulation of the strategic plan at the state level was an alternative policy paradigm to withstand an increasingly uncertain global environment.
- Crowley and Coffey (2007a, 2007b) conducted a comparative study of TT and Growing Victoria Together. Their analysis suggested that TT was created via an apolitical bottom-up process. The political priorities of Growing Victoria Together were intended to bring the social and environmental dimensions into the decision-making process.
- Nabben's (2011) study on Growing Victoria Together highlighted how the Victorian Labor government tried, from 1999 to 2006, to use strategic planning as a community development tool. Manwaring's (2010) research on SASP evaluated the 2006 public consultation process to review the plan.
- Gallop (2007a, 2007b) saw state-level strategic planning as an alternative to the NPM policy model. He felt that if strategic planning was combined with the concept of sustainability, it would provide a strong framework for policymaking. Similarly, Crowley and Coffey (2007a) concluded that a state's strategic plan had the potential to fulfil the sustainability agenda.
- Althaus (2008) pointed out that in each case, these states' plans were initiated by Labor governments after a tight electoral contest that gave them a surprise win. Therefore, each of these state-level strategic plans made by Labor governments was a tool for managing political risks as well as a communication mechanism to manage the government's credibility.
- Van Schoubroeck (2008) analysed the perceptions of the Western Australian political and public sector actors in the Better Planning: Better Services programme. The study revealed that adoption of strategic planning at the state level was the new norm in the era after NPM.
- McMahon and Phillimore (2013) analysed all the strategic plans adopted by the various state governments between 2001 and 2011. Their study demonstrated how each state plan fulfilled its purpose and function as a monitoring, managing, and marketing tool.

Hence, our policy life cycle study of three selected state-level public policies (TT, SASP, and WA's SSS) adds a new perspective and advances the body of literature on Australian sub-national public policies.

Research Methodology and Case Policies

In order to undertake this research, the authors adopted an interpretive case study method (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Vennesson, 2008; Yin, 2009). This study applied the process tracing method to understand the policy life cycle process. This method facilitated the identification of links between possible causes and outcomes of policymaking and also helped investigation of the preceding events or motivations that led to the formulation of these selected public policies. Thus, the process tracing technique enabled mapping of sequential events through the systematic study of historical and archival documents and transcripts of interviews with stakeholders (Bennett & Checkel, 2015). Hence, the corroborative data sources are:

- Academic literature on the topic, public policy documents, government media releases, and the transcripts of parliamentary proceedings from Hansard (an archive of parliamentary debates) on TT, SASP and the State Sustainability Strategy of Western Australia;
- Annual reports of key public agencies and each state's budget reports; and
- Transcripts from interviews with diverse stakeholders. The authors interviewed a wide range of stakeholders from senior ministerial staff, relevant shadow cabinet ministers, senior departmental executives, academics, and key members from relevant pressure groups.

Triangulation of the data on the three cases within a policy timeframe gives an in-depth understanding of the political–economic dimension of sustainable development and the policy legacy of these three state policies. An overview of each policy is described below.

Case Study 1: Tasmania Together

The Tasmania Together Progress Board Act was passed in 2001 by the Jim Bacon-led Labor government, and TT was formulated based on that Act. The aim of TT was to create overarching community-driven goals and benchmarks that, in turn, would drive the other policies and programmes of the government as a whole. Between 2001 and 2012, TT was revised, first in 2006 and then in 2009 (Tasmania Together Progress Board, 2006, 2009a).

Case Study 2: South Australia's Strategic Plan

In 2004 the Labor government led by Premier Mike Rann drafted the state's strategic plan, based on recommendations from the Economic Development Board (EDB) (Hansard, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; Economic Development Board, 2003). EDB's core recommendation was to create a state strategic plan integrated across the whole of government to meet the economic, environmental, and social objectives of the

community. SASP acted as a template for a holistic (environmental, economic, and social) service delivery system to South Australia. Between 2004 and 2014, SASP was revised twice, in 2007 and 2011.

Case Study 3: Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy

In September 2003, Premier Gallop formally launched the State Sustainability Strategy at the 3rd Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development. The State Sustainability Strategy document highlighted the state's key historic environmental, and social issues and provided a strategy for implementing an economic model for the state, based on sustainable development values. The strategy strove to prepare a smooth transition towards a sustainable future with a holistic sustainability framework that was aligned with national and international sustainable development criteria.

Policy Life Cycle of the Three Selected Case Policies

One of the key objectives of this article is to understand 'what led to what' in the policymaking process and 'which factors influenced the policy making process'. In this regard, this section briefly highlights the life cycle of each policy with a thematic title.

Tasmania Together: A Policy Model for Reconnection

In Tasmania, the Australian Labor Party dominated the political domain for 45 years between the 1930s and the 1980s. At that time, it started to lose its electoral base, with a sharp decline in the number of people voting for it. However, the Tasmanian economy was at an all-time low due to both internal and external factors. On the one hand, the economy was burdened by huge government debt, which led to the end of hydropower-stimulated industrialisation. On the other hand, it was exposed to external shocks due to the gradual removal of tariff barriers, as the process of globalisation was adopted in the 1980s. In addition, the prudent economic austerity measures to reduce the state's debt burden undertaken by the then Labor Premier Michael Field also alienated the electorate from the Labor Party. The combination of all these factors led to the decimation of the Tasmanian Labor Party in the 1992 Tasmanian state election.

At this critical juncture, the out-of-power Labor Party was in real need of new ideas:

1. To convince its own electoral base that the Labor Party had better ideas to save Tasmania's flagging economy and Tasmanian society, and,
2. For the party's own revival.

The Tasmanian Labor Party, therefore, had to tour for policy ideas in similar regional jurisdictions around the world. This search led them to the State of Oregon in the USA.

The party found merit in Oregon's state strategic plan (known as Oregon Shines), which was underpinned by sustainable development concepts. The Tasmanian Labor Party saw this policy as a tool for turning around their political fortunes. They promptly internalised the Oregon Shines model. In their 1998 election manifesto, the Labor Party showcased the ideas of the policy model and projected them as a blueprint for Tasmania's turnaround. However, the real political motivation was to use this policy model as a tool to reconnect with the party's lost electoral base. In 1998, the Tasmanian Labor Party won the election.

Once the party had come to power in 1998, the government initiated the process of formulating a benchmark-based overarching policy model called TT, and this commenced with a massive community engagement process. For this reason, the theme for TT can be 'a policy model for reconnection'. In March 1999, the Bacon government formally announced TT as a 20-year socio-economic plan for Tasmania in line with Oregon Shines. Mirroring the Oregon Progress Board, the Tasmanian government created the Tasmania Together Progress Board in 2001 under the Tasmania Together Progress Board Act to monitor the progress of TT. The benchmarks encompassed all three dimensions of sustainable development. The Act stated that TT was an all-encompassing framework 'for planning, budgeting and policy priorities for the government and non-government sectors' (Government of Tasmania, 2001, p. 5).

However, in the 11th year from its launch, the same Labor government, under the premiership of Lara Giddings, repealed the Tasmania Together Progress Board Act. In parliament, the government stated that fiscal deficit was the main justification for repealing the Act. The irony in better allocation of resources through the budget process was the main justification for implementing TT. The key highlights of discussions on TT are presented in Table 1.

In general, a policy's success in achieving its objectives depends on both support from policy champions and the extent of the financial resources allocated for its smooth functioning. To ascertain the effectiveness of TT, the overall life cycle of TT (2000–2012) is, thus, correlated with the Tasmanian state government's fiscal position. In addition, the authors of the study examined how many times the phrase 'Tasmania Together' was mentioned in the government's budget reports during that period. A pictorial depiction of the life cycle is presented in Figure 1. The data show that the policy life cycle of TT forms a skewed shape with three distinct phases. The first phase can be termed 'years of internalisation' (while this new idea was in the process of integration within the government's existing system, which lasted until 2002). This is followed by 'years of high relevance' from 2003 until 2007, during which the relevance of TT as a policy framework reached its high point in around 2004 and remained relevant until there was a budget surplus. From 2005 onwards, the budget deficits started to occur (except in 2007). From 2008 onwards, TT's 'years of declining relevance' coincided with the onset of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which was the death knell for TT. The policy was finally abolished in 2012.

Table 1. Key Highlights on Tasmania Together Discussion from Hansard of the Tasmanian Parliament.

At Pre-adoption stage	Discussion in the Tasmanian Parliament
Argument on Why a policy similar to Oregon Shine is needed in Tasmania	*…Oregon has many similarities to Tasmania - its economic activity is similar to Tasmania and agriculture is one of those activities and that was identified as one of the three key industries in Oregon Shines and the focus in Oregon Shines is to increase jobs in value-adding agriculture industries and increase exports…Oregon Shines…has been successful…in diversifying the economy… (Hansard 1997, pp.35)* *…Oregon is one of those regional economies around the world that have addressed longstanding structural issues by looking at long-term strategic social and economic planning…(Hansard 1997, pp.35)*
At the Adoption Stage	Discussion in the Tasmanian Parliament
The Vision of Tasmania *Together*	*…Tasmania Together is not a detailed prescriptive plan - it tells decision makers what Tasmanians want - it does not tell them how to get there. It is not about abrogating our responsibility to govern or usurping the role of Parliament to make laws. It is about providing a community-based framework for the decisions we may wish to make - and when I say 'we' I mean the whole community… (Hansard 2001, p.42)* *…Tasmanians' view of the sort of State in which they wish to live. It is the people's plan. The community has set itself benchmarks that it wants achieved over the next 20 years - and my Government will play its part in helping achieve those benchmarks… (Hansard 2001, p.42)*
At the Abolition Stage	Discussion in the Tasmanian Parliament
Why Tasmania *Together* had to be abolished ?	*…Over the past 11 years, Tasmania Together has served the community well and I am proud of its achievements. However, in a budget-constrained environment, it is imperative that resources are directed to where they will deliver optimum gains for the community. That is why the government has decided it is no longer possible to properly resource the Tasmania Together project whilst also providing the necessary support for the government's emerging priorities in strategic data management and reporting and community engagement…(Hansard 2012, p.27).*

Source: Hansard of Tasmanian Parliament on Tasmania Together (between 1997 till 2012).

South Australia's Strategic Plan: A Policy Tool to Reposition the Government's Image

The policy life cycle story of SASP's is a chronicle of how to reposition the party's image. In the 1990s, under the Labor government, the state witnessed two major financial debacles:
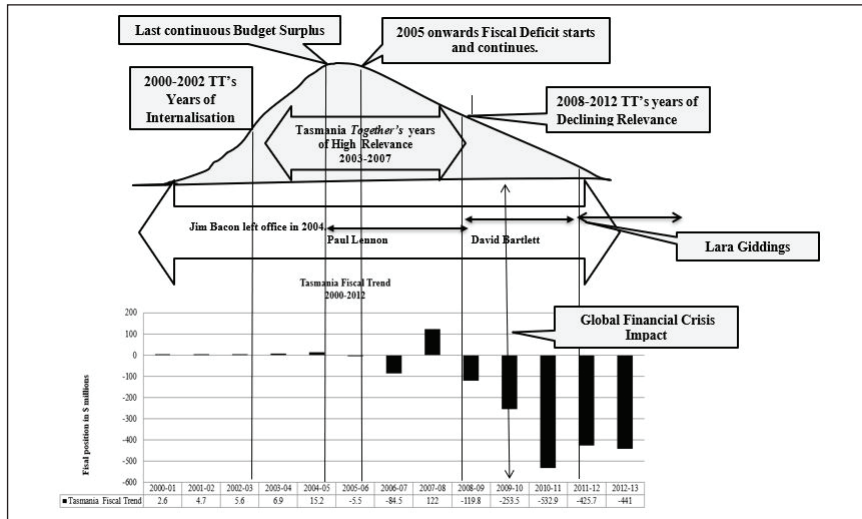
Figure 1. Tasmania Together's Life cycle Relative to the State's Fiscal Trends (2000–2012).

Source: Date for fiscal trends: Budget Paper No.1 documents between 2000 and 2012.

Note: The diagram above is a pictorial interpretation of TT's life cycle. The top of the graph represents TT's slow internalisation phase followed by a 'peak' (the phase of high political relevance), and thereafter, a phase of gradual low relevance and policy abolition at the end. The bottom of the graph represents the fiscal trends.

1. The collapse of South Australia's State Bank, and,
2. The failure of the State Government Insurance Commission.

Both these incidents were seen as stemming from the South Australian Labor government's financial mismanagement. Their fallout led to the Labor Party losing the 1993 state election. For nearly a decade, the Labor Party remained out of power. In 2002, the Rann-led Labor Party came back to power and formed a minority government. At this juncture, political reputation management was the key goal of the government. With this political objective in mind, the South Australian Labor government took a long-term approach by adopting a strategic plan for the state. In order to legitimise the adoption process, an EDB was constituted by the government. The board recommended that the government should adopt a strategic plan, and that it should draw inspiration from the State of Oregon's Oregon Shines policy model. In 2004, Premier Rann launched the State Strategic Plan for South Australia with the vision of addressing the state's economic, social, and environmental issues (Hansard, 2004b, 2004d).

However, with the formation of the majority Labor government after the 2006 state election, the government gradually slipped into political complacency, and the leadership became emboldened. In addition, there was an external economic shock from the fallout of GFC and a change in leadership in 2011 from Premier Mike Rann (the policy champion of SASP) to Premier Jay Weatherill. As a result, the relevance of SASP started to reduce considerably.

Documentary evidence suggests that the overall lifespan of SASP was from 2004 to 2014, after which it was unofficially shelved. An analysis of the state's budget papers reveals that, between 2004 and 2008, the State Strategic Plan's six interrelated objectives were important for budgetary allocations. However, there was a noticeable shift from the financial year 2009–2010 onwards. The 2009–2010 budget indicated that, because of the impact of GFC and the slowdown in the domestic economy, the state anticipated a decline in its revenue of US$3,520 million (Government of South Australia, 2009).

This shift can also be observed in the manner in which SASP was covered in the budget overview papers. Between 2004 and 2008, SASP received, on average, discussion coverage in 7 pages out of a total of 20–23 pages. However, in the following two years of GFC (i.e., 2009 and 2010), SASP received only two pages of coverage and a similar amount at the end of the budget overview paper. From 2011 onwards, the topic received no mention at all. On the contrary, in the 2012 and 2013 budget papers, the new Premier Jay Weatherill's Seven Strategic Priorities, which appeared to be a concise version of SASP, received some emphasis. However, from 2014 onwards, even the Seven Strategic Priorities received no mention in the budget documents.

A similar phenomenon is also evident from the analysis of the key agencies' annual reports; for example, an analysis of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's annual report showed that the coverage of the strategic plan reduced incrementally over the years, from 8–10 pages' coverage in 2008–2009, to 4 pages in 2013–2014, and half a page in 2014–2015. The reporting pattern reflects a gradual decrease in the importance of SASP in the government's decision-making process. In the initial years of SASP (until 2009–2010), the topic was covered in the front section of the annual report (between pages 6 and 8). It then moved to page 20 and to page 33 by 2013–2014. Eventually, in 2014–2015, it moved to Appendix 6 of the annual report.

From 2012–2013 onwards, SASP was superseded by the new Labor Premier Jay Weatherill's Seven Strategic Priorities. It is possible that the formal abolition of the strategic plan would not have been a politically prudent decision for the same Labor government that conceived it, and thus, it was gradually side-lined. Based on the above findings, the study presents a pictorial depiction of SASP's life cycle in Figure 2, and key highlights of discussions on SASP are presented in Table 2. The plateau-shaped skewed graph shows an initial period of high relevance, followed by a phase of gradual slow decline.

Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy: An Aspirational Policy

In Western Australia, there was discontent among the people after the Regional Forests Agreement of 1998. This discontent created a suitable chance for the Western Australian Labor Party to capitalise on the situation politically and to win the upcoming state election. In this way, the Western Australian Labor Party,
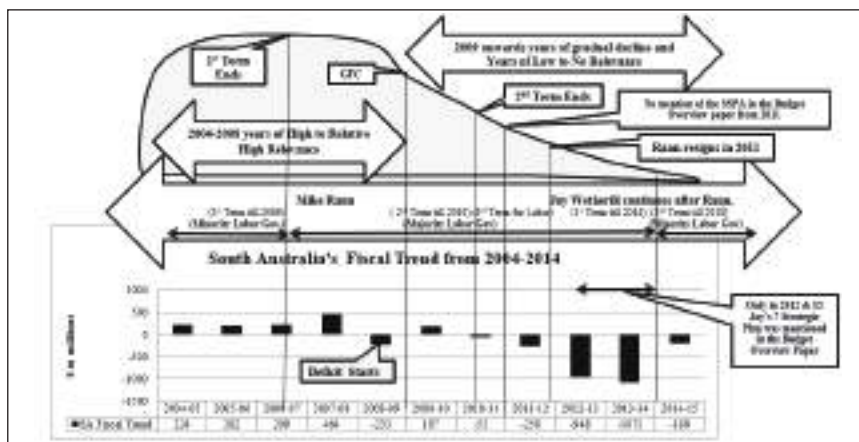
Figure 2. SASP's Life cycle Relative to the State's Fiscal Trends (2004–2014).

Source: Date for fiscal trends: Final Budget outcome documents between 2004 and 2014.
Note: The diagram is a pictorial interpretation of SASP's life cycle. The graph shows SASP's high political relevance phase and forms a plateau followed by a phase of gradual low relevance corresponding to the fiscal trends.

Table 2. Key Highlights of South Australia's Strategic Plan from Public Policy Documents and Stakeholders' Comments.

At the Pre-adoption stage	Recommendation to adopt the Stategic Plan
Advocating to draft a strategic plan for South Australia	…this government should take a new approach and implement a whole-of-government State Strategic Plan that is effective, transparent, long-term and measurable…the State Strategic Plan that must drive the budget… (Economic Development Board 2003, pp. 24-26)
Premier Mike Rann's Vision during SASP's adoption process	Premier Mike Rann's Vision
	… [South Australians] want strong economic growth without compromising the environment or our quality of life… We believe we should exceed the national economic growth rate within 10 years. We believe we should: better the Australian average employment growth rate within 10 years; reduce the net loss of people leaving the state to zero by 2008, with a positive inflow by 2009; almost treble the value of South Australia's export income to $25 billion by 2013; treble expenditure in mining exploration to $100 million by 2007; reduce crime rates to the lowest level in Australia within 10 years; reduce energy consumption in government buildings by 25 per cent within 10 years; increase primary school students' performance in literacy and numeracy to reach or exceed the national average by 2008; and, increase the school leaving age to 17 years by 2010… (Hansard 2004, p. 1821)

(Table 2 continued)

(*Table 2 continued*)

At the Abolition Stage	Stakeholders' Comments
Why SASP was shelved ?	*I think it is true to say that the plan ran out of momentum after 2006 and that sort of thing emboldened them…he became in risk-taking mode…new things to do…impact on budget was quite a bit…had some impact…some elements of SASP did benefit them…*
	…Then from 2008, with the onset of GFC…with the decline of the economy…with the growing level of the unemployment in South Australia…with a decline of the GST revenue…the government was less interested in looking at the horizon, where we want to be in ten years [rather] was much more concerned with the hand-to-mouth [situation]…more concentrated on short term decision making…with the election in 2010 coming, that was a much more pressing need for Rann at that time. Also, in the run up to that election there were a number of other domestic matters…the government was much more focused on the immediate issues…and winning this battle or that battle…short-term victories rather than looking at a distance. I don't recall in 2010…the State Strategic Plan was a big part of the campaign.
	…well, it is a funny thing because they never came out and said that now the Strategic Plan is redundant…they never said that… Previously, under former Premier Mike Rann it was a huge thing…So, when Jay Weatherill came in all of a sudden we have seven strategic priorities and environment is certainly not one of them…

Source: Based on stakeholders' interview comments.

under Dr Geoff Gallop, positioned itself as a sympathetic political force for the cause of the old-growth forests (as demanded by conservationists as well as the public). During the 2001 Western Australian state election, under the leadership of Dr Gallop, the Labor Party made two key electoral promises. These were (a) to address the old-growth forests agenda and (b) to formulate a holistic sustainability strategy for the state that would address all its sustainability issues. Furthermore, Dr Gallop, who was himself an academic, was supportive of the sustainable development philosophy and criticised the prevailing right-of-centre's NPM public policy model.

In 2001, when the party came to power, the Gallop government formulated and launched an aspirational and visionary document under the guidance of Professor Peter Newman. However, the strategy was never implemented because there was a lack of consensual political support within the government, and there were also some sections within the bureaucracy who opposed it. As a result, there was no budgetary allocation for the strategy, even though it was officially launched at an international sustainable development conference.

The current study of the sequence of events shows that the strategy formulation process began with the creation of a Sustainability Policy Unit within the

Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC), with three full-time staff members and an annual budget allocation of US$520,000. During the public consultation phase, the Unit gave presentations to 17 community groups, 56 professional groups, and 79 government organisations across the country. In September 2003, Premier Gallop formally launched the State Sustainability Strategy at the 3rd Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development meeting. The formal adoption of the State Sustainability Strategy was seen as a fulfilment of Labor Party's election promises.

However, a deeper examination of DPC's annual reports shows that WA's SSS did not continue effectively beyond the 2004–2005 financial year (DPC, 2003, 2004). DPC was the lead agency for promoting the State Sustainability Strategy, but there is no further mention of the strategy from the financial year 2005–2006 onwards (DPC, 2005), except for some limited mentions in the annual reports of the Department of Community Development until 2005, of the Department of Industry and Resources until 2006 and of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) until 2007. Professor Newman, who drafted the State Sustainability Strategy and was also the Director of the Sustainability Policy Unit, left the government in 2003 (Curtin University, 2017). His departure is evident from DPC's 2004–2005 annual report, as there is no mention of the Sustainability Policy Unit thereafter (DPC, 2004).

In January 2006, Dr Gallop, the policy's champion and the then Premier of Western Australia, himself left the government. In 2005–2006, DPC's annual report mentioned that the Environmental Policy Unit, the Greenhouse Unit, the Sustainability Policy Unit, and the Sustainability Round Table were to be transferred (with effect from April 2006) from DPC's Policy Division to the Department of Environment, following a February 2006 Cabinet decision taken when Allan Carpenter was the Premier (DPC, 2005). In 2006–2007, the DEC's annual report mentioned that the Sustainability Policy Unit had been renamed the Sustainability Programs Unit (DEC, 2006). However, after 2006–2007, there was no mention of the Sustainability Programs Unit in DEC's annual reports. In this context, it is also important to highlight that less than 2% of Western Australia's total state budgetary allocation to departments was allocated to the Department of Environment and other related agencies, whereas 15% was allocated to economic departments and 63% to social (welfare) departments (as shown in Table 3).

It can, therefore, be argued that the financial ability of the environmental department to execute the strategy was in question, which can be seen as a political ploy by the Allan Carpenter government to shelve the State Sustainability Strategy. In his book entitled *The Lure of Politics: Geoff Gallop's Government 2001–2006*, van Schoubroeck states that:

**Table 3.** Cumulative Budgetary Allocation of WA Agencies.

Budgetary Allocation of Department Categories	Percentage
Economic departments	15.36
Social departments	62.58
Environment departments	1.84

Source: Western Australian Government's Budget Paper 2 (average trend of allocation to agencies).

Despite sporadic attempts by officers within the premier's department to more closely align the two strategies [Better Planning: Better Futures & State Sustainability Strategy] s, this did not eventuate leading to some confusion for public sector agencies and potentially detracting from the ownership of each. The sustainability website suggests that little activity has occurred since Gallop's resignation in 2006 when responsibility was transferred from his department to the Department of Conservation and Environment. The specific legislation has not eventuated, but sustainability principles have been embedded in some legislation. (van Schoubroeck, 2010, p. 210)

In addition, the West Australian Policy Forum (2008) mentions that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) came to power in 2001 with a list of promises encompassing biodiversity, salinity, climate change, renewable energy, wetlands, air quality, marine issues, waste management, and environmental protection. However, the Gallop-led Labor government and the subsequent Carpenter-led Labor government performed poorly in terms of the implementation of policies in these areas, despite the election promises for the advancement of sustainability agendas. Although the State Sustainability Strategy was technically abandoned during Allan Carpenter's government, the process of abandonment started during Gallop's period. This is because no funding was approved even during his tenure, and Professor Newman, who headed the Sustainability Policy Unit, resigned in 2003.

From these documentary analyses, a policy life cycle graph of WA's SSS has been constructed (as shown in Figure 3, and key highlights of discussions on WA's SSS are presented in Table 4). The graph shows a relatively flat life cycle line, with a small bulge representing the launch of the policy.
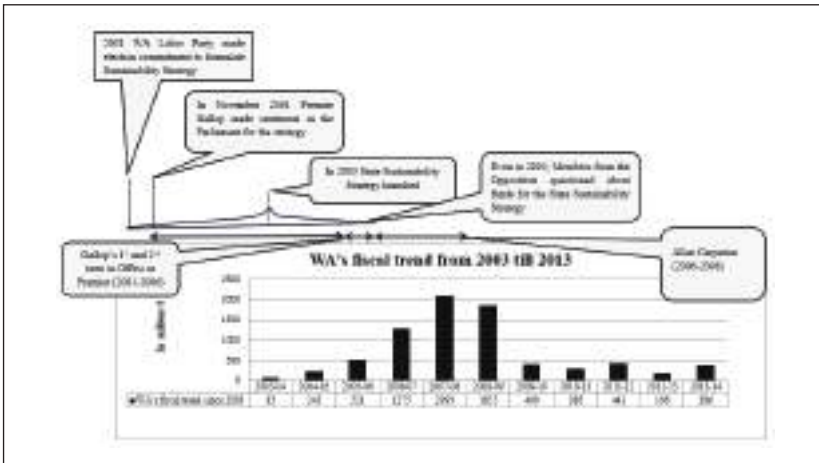
Figure 3. The State Sustainability Strategy's Life Cycle Relative to the State's Fiscal Trends (2003–2013).

Source: For fiscal trends: Budget Overview documents between 2003 and 2013.

Note: Based on the qualitative information and the sequence of events, this diagram is a symbolic pictorial representation of SSS's lifespan from the pre-election period. The arrows in the middle represent the Labor government's tenure in office corresponding to the fiscal trends (at the bottom of the diagram). The small bump in 2003 represents the launch of WA's SSS.

Table 4. Key Highlights of Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy from Hansard of the Western Australian Parliament and Stakeholders.

At Pre-adoption stage	Discussion in the Western Australian Parliament
Argument as to why a Sustainability Strategy is needed for Western Australia	…The development of this strategy is a fundamental component of the Government's election commitment to embrace sustainability. Sustainability is sometimes referred to as the triple bottom line - achieving economic, social and environmental goals at the same time. The strategy will build on the shift to a knowledge economy and help develop the skill base to support the creation of jobs in "smart" industries. It will pursue new forms of development that do not compromise the health of our environment or society…(Hansard 2001, WA Legislative Assembly, pp.5395b-5395b)
At the Adoption Stage	Comment by a stakeholder
Inner dynamics during the adoption stage	…I remember when the plan was released. There was a big conference [the 3rd Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development] in Fremantle. There was lots of opposition within the government to the State Sustainability Strategy… within the Premier's Office … lots of people did not like it. Peter Newman [informed Geoff Gallop] that we had a big international conference in Fremantle…and that would be a great time to release the strategy and Geoff agreed…they released the strategy … After the release…there was a conflict within the government over whether or not they had even agreed with this strategy. Because they were all worried… like all state plans governments on one hand likes them from a marketing point of view, on the other hand they do not like them because they are worried…they have got targets… like election promises. Oh dear, if we release… then people will might hold us for not doing these. So, there was a problem there…
At the Policy Shelving Stage	Discussion in the Western Australian Parliament & Stakeholder's view
Why the sustainability strategy was not implemented	As we found out during the Estimates Committee hearing, part of the problem is that basically no money has been set aside to implement the strategy. An amount of money will be set aside for the sustainability round tables, but the responsibility for the state sustainability strategy will be farmed out to various agencies. There was no budget line item for any of the agencies to enable them to deal with the state sustainability strategy. …I have already indicated that funding does not seem to be there. I urge the Government to articulate very soon what it will do for state sustainability. I understand that Hon Clive Brown is about to announce a new funding package to the tune of some $4 million for industrial development, yet there is nothing for sustainability. (Hansard 2004a, Western Australia Legislative Council, pp.4243c-4249a) …I do not think bureaucrats ever supported it… but a couple of large organisations like the Treasury … they were not supportive…they did not believe in it…[their] view of the world is that the market will sort it out and this view is also shared by a number of other departments … for example, the Department of Mines and Energy, which is now the Department of Mining and Petroleum, they did not believe in it, they saw it as another hurdle in their way of developing mines and petroleum, they saw it as a barrier…

Source: Based on Hansard of WA's Parliament on WA's SSS between 2001 & 2004 and stakeholder's comment.

WA's SSS can, thus, be described as an opportunistic move with good intentions, but, in the end and despite the state's healthy fiscal surplus, the strategy remained just 'an aspirational policy vision'.

Hence, based on the findings of three case policies (TT, SASP, and WA's SSS), the overall contextual factors at each stage are highlighted in Figure 4. The figure is based on the process tracing analytical technique, as adopted in this study. The policy's life cycle stages are categorised into four parts: (a) context stage, (b) influence and learning stage, (c) policy adaptation stage, and (d) policy abandonment/shelving stage. Hence, the process tracing figure (Figure 4) provides a comparative overview of TT, SASP, and WA's SSS life cycle based on the discussion in the previous three sections. Figure 4 also highlights which factors have influenced each policy life cycle stage.

Hidden Successes: A Policy Legacy Perspective

Tasmania Together and SASP were benchmark-based policy models. The benchmarks were allocated to the various government departments according to their statutory economic, social, and environmental functions. In order to understand the impact of these benchmarks, the authors analysed the annual reports of some of the key departments performing economic, social, and environmental functions. The analysis of TT and SASP showed that even though these policies were discontinued or shelved after a certain period, they had certain direct and indirect positive influences on government departments. Based on the values of holistic sustainability, several steps were taken during the policy timeframes.

These steps were manifested through different policies and programmes, such as the adoption of waste management practices, the adoption of climate change initiatives, an emphasis on recycling and sustainable procurement, and investment in public transport systems. In addition, there was policy support for the renewable
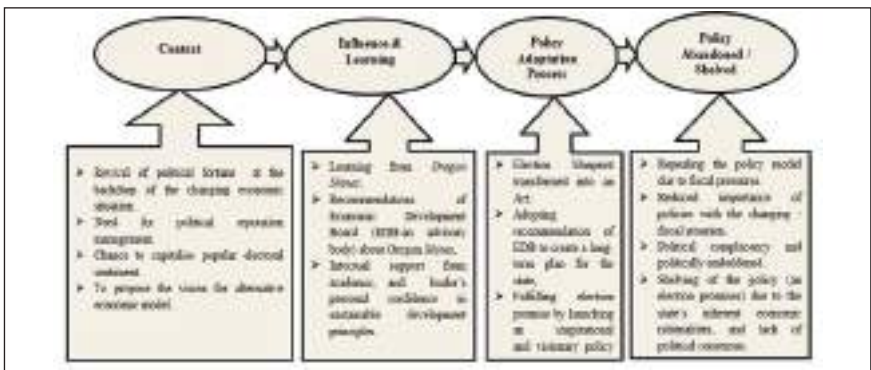
Figure 4. A Comparative Overview of Tasmania Together, SA's Strategic Plan, and WA's State Sustainability Strategy from the Policy Life Cycle Perspective.

Source: The authors.

energy industry and investment in renewable energy. Other social sector initiatives were taken, including support for Aboriginal communities and people with disabilities in public sector jobs, the embracing of gender equality, and the promotion of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. In the case of WA's SSS, the policy was never implemented, but the policy model acted as a moral normative value. The core idea of the policy received some support within a few of WA's public departments, and some of these public departments used the concept to argue for public transport systems. Similarly, the policy model also influenced some of the progressive WA local councils, such as the City of Cockburn and the City of South Perth. These local councils drafted their own sustainability strategies at the local level based on WA's SSS. These policy legacy stories can be described as hidden successes, as they were often overlooked or underappreciated. The highlights of these policy legacies, as mentioned by various stakeholders as well as reported in the annual reports, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Key Highlights of Policy Legacy.

Policy Legacy Perspective	Stakeholder's Comments on Tasmania *Together*
Community Engagement, Collaboration and Coalition of Interest	…*Tasmania Together was a terrific notion…it was a wonderful idea… an inspirational attempt to govern humanity better and to produce better social outcomes…to produce better environmental outcomes…to produce better economic outcomes…in tandem…actually to find [a way] to have a dialogue with people about what they want and how they can work together to achieve better things for people…* …*benchmarking and performance measurement a much higher profile and people understood it. I think there were occasions when we had cross-agencies collaboration. It would not have occurred without Tasmania Together. [For example] the regional jobs program. That was one of the important benchmarking programs…* …*Then use of 1080 poison. 1080 is a poison that was used to kill wallabies and possums. Very deadly…it killed in the hundreds and thousands [of them] every year…Community didn't like it so there was a benchmark which said by 2020 there will be no use of 1080… [proposed for gradual decline over the years]… Environmental group used those benchmarks to beat the government around the head and say okay you got these benchmarks. This is what people want, you have to do it…* …*there were issues relating to adult literacy… then the issue relating to domestic violence. Benchmarks were made and used to justify a range of policies…to reduce domestic violence…* …*I suspect there were number of government initiatives that wouldn't have gone through the budget process without Tasmania Together's benchmarks…*
Policy Legacy	Stakeholder's Comments on South Australia's Strategic Plan

(Table 5 continued)

(*Table 5 continued*)

Policy Legacy Perspective	Stakeholder's Comments on Tasmania *Together*
Improving Public Sectors' Accountability	…*It is quite a comprehensive document that outlines specific objectives and targets. It is more about strategic objectives and targets rather than strategies. Having said that it does hold the government accountable… it has attempted to look at different dimensions of social, economic, environmental, and cultural aspects…it is not perfect but much better than you may find in other jurisdictions…*
	Evidence from South Australian Public Agency's Annual Report
Action on Environment & Climate Change;	*In order to implement the SASP's 'Attaining Sustainability' goal, the South Australian Cabinet endorsed the Greening of Government Operations (GoGO) Policy Framework in 2003, and in 2006, the GoGO Action Plan. Key priorities under the GoGO Action Plan are :to reduce the energy consumption of public offices; to reduce water consumption; to implement at the zero-waste management system; to reduce the carbon footprint of agencies through the installation of energy efficiencies, waste management systems, water efficiency awareness, and print consolidation and print paper usage; to reduce average emissions of public vehicle; to procure public products and services in a socially and environmentally preferred way; to support sustainability and greening processes and principles by incorporating a greening statement in job and person specifications; to*
Improved Public Agency's Disclosure Practice	*reflect sustainability and green values in administrative policies, procedures, and guidelines of all agencies.* *Reporting on workforce diversity age profiles; cultural and linguistic diversity; number of employees with ongoing disabilities.* *Reporting on adaptations, types of disability (part of employee team)* *Reporting on number of Aboriginal and /or Torres Strait Islander Employees*
Policy Legacy	Stakeholders' Comments on Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy
Reputation management & legitimacy claims	*the State Sustainability Strategy… But I do not know if that is still there… or if it is still operational within the state government…how influential it was even within the Labor [Party] that was a big discussion one can have… my feeling was that some department took it seriously and some did not… there were some who supported it…for example, the Public Transport Authority and Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC)… who even today talk about sustainable development… they embraced it because of Alannah Mac Tiernan, Minister of the time who drove very hard within in her own portfolio… they embrace it even today… sort of relates to sustainable development concepts… whenever they find opportunity in doing something they will say look you know …transport oriented development for example…which is an integration of WAPC and transport they will argue transport oriented development around train station is fits within sustainable development…That's what they will argue …*

Source: The authors.

Table 6. A Comparative Overview of Oregon Shines, TT, SASP and WA's SSS.

Topic of comparison	Oregon Shines	Tasmania Together	South Australia's Strategic Plan	Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy
Jurisdiction	Oregon, USA	Tasmania, Australia	South Australia, Australia	Western Australia, Australia
Policy dimension	State-level Strategic Plan	State-level Strategic Plan	State-level Strategic Plan	State-level Strategy
Basic underpinning values	Based on sustainable development values	Based on sustainable development values	Based on sustainable development values	Strongly rooted in sustainable development principles
Policy time frame	Launched in 1989 continued until 2009	Launched in 2000 and officially disbanded in 2012	Launched in 2004, not officially disbanded. In this study the policy is followed until 2013	Launched in 2003, but not implemented
Number of versions	Oregon *Shines* I, II, and III	TT had three versions 2001, 2006 and 2009	SASP had three versions, 2004, 2007, and 2011	Only one version
How the policy was shaped	Even though the policy contained holistic sustainability values from its inception, the strategic plan gained its true sustainable development features through an organic process of trial and error.	Because the policy-maker picked up the Oregon-based model off the shelf, the state ended up with a sustainable development-featured strategic plan, by default.	Because the policy makers picked up the Oregon-based model off the shelf, the state ended up with a sustainable development-featured strategic plan, by default. Also recommended by Economic Development Board to adopt strategic plan based on Oregon model.	Strong personal belief of Premier Gallop on sustainable development principles and values which translated into policy making and supported by Prof. Peter Newman in drafting the strategy.
How the policy was administered	The policy framework had a bottom-up approach and was administered by the Oregon Shines Progress Board	The policy framework had a bottom-up approach and was administered by the Tasmania *Together* Progress Board	The policy had a top-down approach and the Department of Premier and Cabinet was the lead agency to administer it.	The policy was drafted by the Sustainability Policy Unit under the DPC, but was never implemented

(Table 6 continued)

(Table 6 continued)

Topic of comparison	Oregon Shines	Tasmania Together	South Australia's Strategic Plan	Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy
Influence on the budget	Anecdotal evidence from the literature shows that policy had an influence on the budget	The analysis of data and stakeholders' comments showed that the plan influenced the budget process, at least, during its high relevance phase	The analysis of data and stakeholders' comment showed that the plan influenced the budget process, at least, during its high relevance phase	The strategy did not receive funding for implementation
Level of political support	Had bipartisan support (both Democrats and Republicans supported it and continued the policy)	Implemented by Labor Premier Jim Bacon, however, subsequent Labor Premiers were indifferent to Tasmania *Together*	Implemented by Labor Premier Mike Rann, however, post-2006 election and post-GFC the SASP's importance reduced (even during Rann's Premiership)	Introduced by Labor Premier Gallop and not implemented even during Gallop's Premiership
Political economic dimensions	Implemented to turn around Oregon's flagging economy	Implemented to turn around Tasmania's flagging economy as well as to reconnect with Labor's lost electoral base	Implemented to project Rann-led, Labor government as a politically virtuous government, for reputation management of the government and to show that they had a plan and strategic vision for the state.	To ride the popular electoral sentiment, to win an election, to incorporate sustainability values into WA's public policy, and to change the course of economic development in WA.
Key characteristics	Addressed contemporary and changing community aspiration and issues of Oregon	Addressed contemporary and changing community aspirations and issues of Tasmania	Addressed contemporary and changing community aspirations and issues of SA	Planned to make structural change in WA, as well as had goals to contribute to global sustainability agenda

(Table 6 continued)

(*Table 6 continued*)

Topic of comparison	Oregon Shines	Tasmania Together	South Australia's Strategic Plan	Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy
Why discontinued / abandoned/ shelved	Funding was stopped	As the policy moved further away from the initial champions, subsequent Premiers could not find merit in the policy other than an effect of GFC acted as a nail to knell	Political complacency post 2006 state election, political emboldenment of Mike Rann once formed majority government post 2006 election, next Permier Jay Weatherill tried to disassociate himself from Rann era policies as well as effects of Global Financial Crisis.	The sustainability strategy was not accepted within the government as a consensual policy agenda, as it was seen as too ambitious, and contradicted the state's economic dependency ethos
Recognition and impact	It was widely studied and exemplified by academics and in the policy literature. The model was also followed in Tasmania, British Columbia and South Australia.	It is one of the most respected and ideal community-based bottom-up strategic plans. Short-listed for international award. Analysis of agencies' annual report showed that many policies and programs happened under the influence of TT	Analysis of agencies' annual reports showed strong evidence of direct and indirect influence on public sector's accountability towards holistic sustainability performance and disclosure practice. SASP's model and benchmarks were embraced by SA local councils and stakeholders.	Remained mainly an aspirational and visionary document.

(Table 6 continued)

Topic of comparison	Oregon Shines	Tasmania Together	South Australia's Strategic Plan	Western Australia's State Sustainability Strategy
Overall stakeholders' view	A role model policy	An inspirational attempt to govern humanity better. Tyranny of benchmarking on public agencies. TT acts as an innovative tool to bring communities from different strata of society under one platform.	A comprehensive document that institutes public accountability and transparency. A document of and for the power elites. Projected as community aspiration. SASP had no or less resonance among common voters. In the initial four to five years the SASP fulfilled its purpose	The strategy was a personal conviction on sustainability agenda of the Premier The strategy was too ambitious. A bold blueprint.

Source: The authors.

Conclusion

Overall, the analysis of these three policies showed there was a renewed interest in public policies based on sustainable development values of the early 2000s within the Australian Labor Party at the state level. A comparative overview of TT, SASP, and WA's SSS is presented in Table 6. In the case of Tasmania and South Australia, this renewed interest was because of the adoption of the Oregon policy model, which had inbuilt sustainable development features. Hence, as Tasmania and South Australia implemented the imported policy model, they developed a triple bottom line structured policy, by default. In view of the facts about the contextual motivations, it can be implied that the apparent renewed interest in sustainable development was not necessarily because of a strong belief in the sustainable development concept; rather, the adoption of these policy models had strategic electoral–political motivations designed to reconnect with lost electorates and for reputation management of the newly elected Labor government.

In the case of Western Australia, the strategy drew its inspiration from both the UN's Brundtland Report and Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, since Premier Gallop himself believed in sustainable development values. His party may have tried to embrace the strategy with a politically opportunistic motive. In the end, because of the lack of consensus within the party, the State Sustainability Strategy was never internalised as a

policy model at government level. Hence, in Western Australia, the contextual motivation for adopting the policy arose from the combination of electoral–political factors and the personal convictions of the key policy champions (such as Gallop and a few of his colleagues in the cabinet). Even though the policy idea seems to have been a failure in the political domain, the State Sustainability Strategy remained an inspirational document. It was an intellectually stimulating normative policy document that remained an ideal policy model. As a result, a few of WA's public departments, and progressive local WA councils, adopted the core values of the policy as their inspiration.

Furthermore, a key conceptual insight from this study is that even though the theoretical meaning of sustainable development or holistic sustainability (environmental, economic, and social) that was adopted was same, however, what constitutes sustainability and the components of each sustainability pillar differed with the changing aspirations and priorities of the jurisdiction; for example, Tasmania was the only state that focused on poverty and the cost of living. In its 2006 version, TT included benchmarks relating to skills shortages, mental health, flexible working arrangements, renewable energy, organic agriculture, waste management, obesity, road safety, housing cost and availability, health waiting times, business innovation, and leisure and recreational events (Tasmania Together Progress Board, 2006). In the 2009 version, new benchmarks were introduced based on communities' new priorities and expectations, such as transport accessibility, value-added food production, levels of greenhouse gas emissions (in mega tonnes), growth in the number of small businesses, avoidable mortality, gross value of agricultural and fish production, percentage of Tasmania covered by native vegetation, exports of food, agriculture and fisheries, and overall student performance against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks (Tasmania Together Progress Board, 2009b).

Similarly, in 2007, new benchmarks were added to SASP relating to Aboriginal well-being, early childhood, sustainable water supply, multiculturalism, cultural engagement, employment participation, work–life balance, and venture capital investment (DPC, 2013). In the 2011 version, 21 new targets were added to SASP based on the changing expectations and priorities of the South Australian communities (Government of South Australia, 2011). The new emphases were on increasing the use of urban space, doubling the number of people cycling, reducing violence against women, reducing the number of repeat offenders, increasing the participation of older people in the workforce, increasing access to self-managed funding for people with disabilities, developing a climate change adaptation plan, increasing the purchase of renewable energy, and recycling stormwater and wastewater (Government of South Australia, 2011).

WA's SSS had seven foundational principles and four process principles; in addition, it had six visions for Western Australia's sustainability. The strategy had 6 goals for the government and 42 priority areas for action (Sustainability Policy Unit, 2003). All these visions, goals, and priority areas had triple button line aspects. The strategy aimed to enable WA's smooth transition towards a sustainable future.

Hence, the broad conceptual meaning and structure of sustainability remained the same in all three policies, but the issues or components that constitute a holistic

sustainability plan for a society changed with time based on the changing contemporary issues and aspirations of that society. TT and the SASP were benchmark-driven, whereas WA's SSS was more principle-based and strategic in nature. Furthermore, TT was more community-driven with a bottom-up approach, whereas SASP had a much more government-managed top-down approach. Although both SASP and TT had political as well as leadership support, the implementation process of both policies was suddenly halted due to the high fiscal deficit with the onset of the GFC. As Tasmania and South Australia were both fiscally dependent states, the continuation of these policies slowed down, and TT was later abolished, whereas SASP was discontinued. Ironically, WA was a much more fiscally independent state, but WA's SSS still did not see the light of the day because of a lack of political support.

The main highlight of this policy life cycle analysis reveals that institutional factors may facilitate the diffusion and learning of sustainable development value-based policies. However, the actual implementation and continuation of a policy rests on fortuitous factors, such as

1. Electoral politics;
2. the support of policy champions;
3. whether a political entity views sustainable development as a form of political capital that can assist a party to (re)gain the electorate's confidence;
4. the fiscal position of the jurisdiction; and
5. whether a sustainability-based policy framework contradicts the jurisdiction's economic
6. model (as was the case with Western Australia's extraction-based economy).

Therefore, institutional factors are important for dissemination of sustainability values, but electoral politics as well as political–economic factors are necessary as contextual stimuli to incorporate the prevailing sustainability values into the policy model. At the same time, political–economic factors can also act as triggers to distance from a policy model based on sustainable development. However, the chance of a government adopting a sustainable development policy is greater with a government that is run by a left-of-centre political organisation. This insight from the study aligns with the findings of Fielding et al. (2012). At the same time, democratic legitimacy does not guarantee the continuity of a public policy. Hence, two factors must be present simultaneously, such as support from policy champions, and a prolonged period of sound fiscal position, for the continuity of a public policy.

Thus, the empirical findings of this study have confirmed the importance of the electoral–political dimension of sustainable development (see also O'Connor, 2006). We must look beyond the traditional three-dimensional view of sustainability. Finally, the overall analysis suggests that even though two of the three grand policies based on sustainable development lost their political relevance after a certain period, and, indeed, the third was never implemented, the diffusion of holistic sustainability values did not end there. Some aspects of these values

continued and remained ingrained in each state's public policies domain. The study found that that the holistic sustainability value system, which was introduced initially as a new system, has been transformed into part of the ongoing culture because of these strategic plans and strategies. These are the hidden successes, as well as the policy legacy, of these policy interventions, which have previously been overlooked.

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