



## Foreword

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we face a series of daunting challenges: economic, social, technological and environmental. We have the capacity to tackle these issues and produce a desirable future as a culturally diverse, economically sound and ecologically sustainable society with a quality of life that would be the envy of the rest of the world. However we will only achieve that goal if we develop a vision of our desired future and work purposefully toward it.

The future is not a place we are going, but something we are creating. All decisions and actions open some doors and close others. Our options are affected by global forces and events over which we have no control, but that doesn't mean we are powerless. We cannot choose which wind will blow, but we can set the sail. It is easiest to sail in the direction the wind is blowing, but skillful sailors can use whatever wind blows to sail wherever they want. Once we recognise that our decisions and actions are shaping the future, we can choose which way we want to go.

There is now widespread agreement that we should aim to achieve a sustainable future. Education is the key, providing both an awareness of the problems and, more importantly, the capacity to find solutions. Since sustainability involves meeting our needs in ways that don't reduce the capacity of future generations to meet their needs, there are clearly at least three dimensions.

- 1) We should not be eroding the resource base, since to do so would reduce the resources available to future generations.
- 2) We should not be damaging the natural environment in ways that would affect the capacity of future generations to meet their needs for water, air, food, and such intangibles as the cultural identity and spiritual sustenance we obtain from the natural world.
- 3) We should be working towards an equitable and stable society, giving all Australians the opportunity to achieve their full potential.



In some ways a sustainable future is a utopian vision, but so was a world without slavery 200 years ago, voting for all adults 100 years ago, and so 20 years ago were South Africa without apartheid and Berlin without the Wall. Many things that we take for granted today, from social rights to technical services, were once utopian visions. Since we are creating the future, we should be striving to make it sustainable. Our science gives us better understanding than ever before of the natural world and the impact we have on it. Our technology gives us unprecedented capacity to change the world to meet our needs and suit our desires. Our humanity requires us to use that scientific understanding and that technological capacity to develop a sustainable society. That is our moral responsibility to future generations.

As patron of the Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative, I look forward to being part of this journey and supporting schools as they chart their own course towards a sustainable future.

**Ian Lowe, Emeritus Professor, Griffith University**  
**Patron of the Queensland Environmentally Sustainable Schools Initiative**

