



# Environment and Sustainability: A Policy Handbook

*By Stephen Dovers, Karen Hussey*

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Dovers and Hussey argue that better public policy is the key to creating a more sustainable environment and show what this might involve. This is an intensely practical book, intellectually rigorous, and written in a concise and accessible style.

They meld a deep knowledge of traditional public policy with a close understanding of sustainability problems and an appreciation of the complex institutional systems which make up modern civil society. As well as establishing an operational framework for policy analysis and prescription, they provide ways of fulfilling key elements of an effective policy process with chapters on:

Problem framing

Policy framing

Policy implementation

Policy monitoring and evaluation

Public participation

Institutional settings and reform for effective policy.

This edition responds to the increasing urgency and complexity of challenges of environment and sustainability. It is updated to include new perspectives from policy theory and practice, expands the coverage of international dimensions of trade and regulation and incorporates coverage of emerging issues and policy challenges such as climate mitigation and adaptation, urban sustainability, and the nexus between climate change, energy and water.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

Dovers and Hussey present here a framework for the development of good public environment and sustainability policy, laying out in detail the processes required to demonstrate a credible effort to deliver desirable and effective behaviour change in pursuit of sustainability. This book advertises itself as a primer for improving policymakers' grasp of the challenges and opportunities that environment and sustainability pose for policymaking. It will also enlighten scientists with a solid understanding of their field but for whom government policy processes - including communications strategies, public consultation and drivers of large-scale behaviour change - remain a mystery. Especially educational for regulation advocates is the discussion of using a mix of policy instruments for different audiences and stages of the policy process, as necessary to truly change individuals' and organisations' motivations and behaviour. ... Information is provided here in a well-structured and concise manner in very accessible prose ... For many readers, its merit will be to remind them of what they once knew and should have remembered, while fleshing out a few areas of new knowledge. ... it is very useful to provide the full scope of options in areas such as types of public consultation, criteria for policy instruments, available policy instruments and policy coordination. The handbook fulfils its mission as an excellent reference to be consulted as needed. Read full review... - Suzanne Hoverman, Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, December 2014

Reviews of previous edition Stephen Dovers' new book on creating, implementing and evaluating environmental policy is an important book that deserves a wide readership. It is important because of how well it addresses a complex, difficult and often controversial topic that is of critical interest to modern society. It deserves a wide readership because anyone involved or interested in developing effective environmental policy will benefit from it. It should be mandatory reading for every minister responsible for an environment or natural resource portfolio, every government policy officer responsible for environmental issues, and every environmental management student. ... What makes this book so valuable is its synthesis of a conceptual framework for developing, implementing and evaluating environmental policies. It crystallizes what many experienced environmental managers will know intuitively to be true... Even readers who are familiar with environmental policy development will benefit from this book through the synthesis of ideas and discussion of some of the recurrent debates in environmental policy that it provides. The discussion of the recurrent debate about regulation versus market mechanisms for environmental policy is particularly noteworthy. ... Another noteworthy feature of the book is that, although the writer is Australian, it does not focus the discussion on any country in particular but considers problems, concepts and solutions that are generally applicable. This feature both widens the current readership and means that the book will retain its currency in the future. ... [The] writing style is refreshing for its brevity and clarity. The conceptual framework provides the structure of the book, which ties it neatly together but does not stifle the writing or the concepts. In short, you should buy this book, read it and absorb its messages if you are interesting in creating, implementing or evaluating environmental policy. - Hearsay (Jnl of Qld Bar Assn), Issue 10, 27 September 2006 [Dovers] is concerned to argue for mechanisms which 'understand policies as purposeful experiments in the face of uncertainty' (p. 125), and 'adaptive management of policy' (p. 36). After very briefly sketching existing general models of the public policy process, he asks whether, and in what way, sustainability issues are different from typical policy contexts. He argues that the spatial and temporal scale, the existence of possible ecological thresholds and limits, the cumulative, and in some cases irreversible, impacts of events and actions, together with limited or absent relevant knowledge, are different in type and reach than most issues dealt with in traditional public policy. Thus there are different imperatives to be considered, and an 'experimental' approach, with pre-planned monitoring and evaluative strategies, is essential. He then develops a framework for approaching policy, lightly illustrated with mostly Australian examples of

environmental and sustainability policy problems, which, if followed, would help minimise the tendency to 'quick-fix' headline-grabbing rhetorical pronouncements. The argument is persuasive ... This is a very valuable book ...Dover uses refreshingly transparent language, and he makes no prior assumption about familiarity with the public policy or ecological literature. The book is, however, very dense: about 25-30 per cent of the text is in the form of bullet-point lists or tables, which are essential parts of the argument; and as he outlines his recommended framework of policy analysis, formation, implementation, evaluation and reanalysis, there are frequent, necessary, cross-references. ... almost every point Dovers made prompted reflection ... it is one of the most engaging books I have read for some time. - Reviews in Australian Studies, Vol 1 No 2, April 2006 The ten chapters are grouped into three parts; the first part includes background material; the second outlines the steps in his framework; and the third consists of a single chapter of concluding comments. Dovers, although quite opinionated in person, is suitably academically guarded in this chapter and throughout the book. Concerning the prospects for sound environmental and sustainability policy, he suggests that the minimum criteria for a credible commitment would be ... These all sound very reasonable and appropriate. ... Dovers makes another very apt observation when he says that the precise choice of strategy (decision) may be less critical in the long run than having an adaptive, reflexive, listening and learning management process. Achieving this will be a 'big long-term endeavour': and all he seeks to do, he says rather modestly, is to make 'a small contribution to that endeavour'. He has certainly done that, and more. ... I found the book to be interesting and useful. Clear and accessible in style, tone, organisation and presentation, it will be a useful resource for all those associated with sustainability and policy. - Frank Vancly, Rural Society, Vol 15(2), 2005 A real strength of Stephen Dovers' book is that it starts with a clear acknowledgement of the challenges, in policy and action terms, of the current transition we are just beginning; a transition from managing environmental effects to the much more complex goal of developing more sustainable ways of meeting society's needs and wants. Against this canvas he unpicks our current policy processes and finds them inadequate for the advancing environmental sustainability. Stephen Dovers' list of what would constitute a 'credible commitment' to sustainability in terms of believable reforms should be compulsory reading for all local and central government politicians. - Dr J Morgan Williams, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, New Zealand ... a seminal contribution to the literature on learning for sustainability, a truly comprehensive analysis of the issues and policy implications. It is not a toolkit but discusses all major challenges of the integration of social, economic and ecological issues under various perspectives. Dovers' insights on participation, integration and institutional change in particular will be welcomed by educators and policy professionals, students, change managers and administrators at the cutting edge of sustainability. - Adjunct Professor Paul J Perkins, Chair, National Environmental and Education Council, Australia Sustainability is the pivot around which global environmental policy making is supposed to revolve. Yet the concept is often poorly understood, and its translation into domestic policy and firm action suffers from confusion about whether sustainability is merely aspirational window dressing or a serious goal of public administration. In this valuable and thoughtful book, Stephen Dovers encapsulates what is going wrong in the translation process, from strategic policy setting to implementation and evaluation of decision-making; and offers a valuable framework for improving our understanding of how integrated, participatory and accountable processes can deliver on the good intent but weak commitment that has to date marked much of environmental decision-making in Australia. - Professor Gerry Bates, Environmental Law and Policy Consultant The complexity of ecological sustainability demands new approaches to the formulation and evaluation of environmental policy and practice - Stephen Dovers' Environment and Sustainability Policy provides an important and timely framework to help with this critically important task. Dovers masterfully explains why researchers, land managers, and environmental professionals are all deeply enmeshed in government policy making and how all these different players can work more effectively together to achieve environmental sustainability. This book is essential reading for anyone involved in Natural Resource Management. - Professor David Bowman, Director of Australian Research Council Key Centre for Tropical Wildlife Management, Charles Darwin University

## About the Author

**Stephen Dovers** is Director, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University, and is a leading scholar of environmental and natural resource policy, the institutional dimensions of sustainable development, disaster management and climate adaptation.

**Karen Hussey** is Senior Lecturer at the Fenner School of Environment and Society at The Australian National University where she undertakes research on the policy and institutional dimensions of sustainability. Dr Hussey leads several projects in the area of climate adaptation, energy and water governance, and the links between trade and environmental regulation.

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