



Media release

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NEW REPORT:

AUSTRALIA'S APPROACH TO PUBLIC POLICY NEGLECTS SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Australian public policy is dominated by an economic way of thinking that discounts critical social and environmental factors, according to a new report, *Stating the Obvious? The case for integrated public policy*, released today.

The report demonstrates the crucial importance for governments to better integrate social and environmental outcomes into policymaking, in addition to the well-accepted economic ones.

"Our research has found that governments' decision-making has become dominated by a type of economic fundamentalism, not only in Australia but also in other high income countries around the world, such as the UK," Paul Shepanski, lead-author of the report, said today.

"This helps to explain why, despite sustained economic growth, so many people are becoming cynical and jaundiced about the performance of their governments," he said. "It also explains why critical social issues such as the plight of remote indigenous communities are only addressed when they reach crisis point.

"Today when the government evaluates policy options, social effects are generally only considered to the extent that the economic assessment framework is able to include them. And it is only very recently that policymakers have recognised the vulnerability of the environment and looked to find ways to address it in their assessments," Mr Shepanski said.

"Even then, with issues such as energy use and climate change, only the financial impact tends to influence decisions, not the direct consequences for the environment and for the people, animals and plants that live in it.

"We're suggesting an alternative approach, that all public policies be assessed in an integrated way, according to their contribution to true national wealth. True national wealth recognises the validity of progress in all three areas of national life – economic, social and environmental.

"With a federal election looming, political leaders on all sides should spell out the full implications of their policies for the lives of those who will elect them, explicitly addressing the environmental and social dimensions as well as the economic. Of crucial importance is how our nation's great natural wealth will be nurtured and how the relationships that form the fabric of our life together will be supported," Mr Shepanski said.

#Ends ... The report is available for free download from www.relationshipsforum.org.au

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