Implementation of environmental sustainability in business: suggestions for improvement

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Abstract

This paper discusses the options for implementing ‘sustainable’ environmental business strategies that are acceptable to a multiplicity of stakeholders. To evaluate the current situation in Australia a content analysis of the web pages for leading companies indicates that there is little tangible evidence that sustainable business practices are being implemented. The authors propose several directions for research into substantive issues between ethical behaviour, corporate social responsibility and environmentally sustainable behaviour for business. Each of these areas is developing research in relative isolation. However, we argue that this paradigmatic divide is limiting the opportunities for research to provide real insight into seemingly intractable problems.

Keywords: sustainability, corporate social responsibility, business ethics.

1. Introduction

Sustainability is an abstract term with multiple dimensions. For example, the Oxford Dictionary [1] states that it is something which is 1) supportable or bearable, 2) able to be upheld or defended, 3) able to be maintained at a certain level. The meaning of ‘maintain’ suggests supported or upheld over time. Thus, it is clear that to be sustainable, an action has to be capable of being maintained over the longer term [2]. The term ‘environmental sustainability’ has come to contain these ideas in relation to the nature of the biosphere. That is, in order for business, products and actions to be sustainable, the biosphere must support and bear them. The biosphere must also be protected (defended) and upheld in the longer term. Sustainability concepts have also been applied to social situations [3] and program [4,5] as well as, organisational sustainability (which may or may not be financial) [6]. In addition the concept has been applied extensively to health

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programs which need to be (self) sustainable beyond the initial investment of externally applied effort [4, 7]. However, sustainability can also mean financial sustainability whereby the business entity has a responsibility to remain financially viable over the longer term. This is of particular concern in areas where shareholders play a part in the corporate governance structure [8].

1.1 **Stakeholders and Corporate Social Responsibility**

There is a myriad of stakeholders who may have an interest in sustainability in all of its guises. The discourse on the interconnectedness of organisations with the world around them and the resulting imperative for sustainability dates back to the writings of Mary Parker Follet in 1918 [9], however the term ‘stakeholder’ emerged as a key consideration in the corporate domain in 1984 through the seminal work of Freeman [10]. While the term stakeholder had been used for many decades, it was Freeman who described a stakeholder ‘in an organisation [as] (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives’ ([10] p.46). In consideration of the relative importance, or powers of the stakeholders, Freeman ([10]p.143) ‘forwarded the criteria of cooperativeness and competitiveness as ways to distinguish stakeholders’ as well as categorising stakeholders into ‘generic’ and ‘specific’ groupings’. In more recent times there has been no clear agreement as to what are the exact attributes of the term ‘stakeholder’ (see discussion in [11]). However, there is consensus that the concept of ‘stakeholders’ has diversified to include many other groups than those who were traditionally seen to have a financial ‘stake’ in the corporation towards a more values based perspective [12,11,13]. Thus, there is a potential for tension between those with an interest in the activities of the organisation in terms of social and environmental sustainability and those primarily concerned with financial sustainability. Of course, these are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories, as is evidenced by the growing demand for ethical [14] and environmentally positive investment [15].

As a consequence of the multiple conceptualisations of sustainability, and the variety of potential stakeholders with competing and sometimes mutually exclusive motivations, business is left with the dilemma of which needs to fulfil first: customers, shareholders, stakeholders, government or society (and if society we might also need to decide the local or global society)?

For a short time, ‘corporate social responsibility’ offered a potential panacea to manage these competing demands. However, as neatly expressed by [8]:

“Both the developed and developing worlds are rapidly reaching the point where they must decide if today’s global CSR movement is a passing social fad, a threat to economically efficient corporate capitalism, an intrinsic element of corporate responsibility, or even a key to humanity’s long-term survival.” (p.86)

The competing demands of saving humanity and dealing with a threat to the economic efficiency of the organisation are likely to require incommensurable strategies and activities. The lack of an agreed framework for exactly what is ‘corporate social responsibility’ has led to a proliferation of actions which may or may not be ‘responsible’ depending on which stakeholders’ considerations are the driving motivation behind the action [16].
1.2 Ethics in business

Another framework which offers support for business decision making is that of ‘ethics’ and ‘ethical behaviour.’ If embedded appropriately, ethical frameworks can obviate the need for other frameworks [17,18]. For example, as illustrated in Stevens’ [18] work, organisational codes of conduct can be developed which encompass environmentally positive behaviours. Further, the teaching of ethical behaviour at university can limit the overall damage done by the individual in the pursuit of organisational goals [17]. Unfortunately, the use of ethical frameworks is fraught in business; where the question arises - which framework to use? For example, mining companies have an obligation to their shareholders to cut costs and increase wealth. However, they may also have an obligation to the wider society to decrease pollution and restore the land that they have mined to the local community in a condition where it can continue to be used. Not fully restoring the land may not draw international media attention (due to a potential lack of agency within local communities), or shareholder angst, but a decline in profits may, especially in an era of share market uncertainty. In the consequentialist framework, an action would be judged to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ according to its ‘value’ trade-off (that is; it is not wrong if it does not hurt anyone/anything) [19]. In the above case, the business needs to weigh up consequences of the multiplicity of stakeholders, assuming that all stakeholders have the right to equal value in outcomes of the various tradeoffs being made. We argue that few businesses are in a position to argue the intrinsic value of a particular action with the finesse of an ethical philosopher and would prefer a more clearly defined pathway for decision making. For many the framework is profit and growth, as the consequences of these are more readily assessable by their stakeholders.

A brief reading of The Journal of Business Ethics would illustrate many an example of how difficult the framing of ‘ethical’ behaviour in business is. In many cases, ethics are confounded with morals and there is an assumption that ethical behaviour is intrinsically ‘friendly’ and ‘moral’ (see discussion in [20,21,18,13]. We are not convinced that this is yet the case. We maintain that ethical decision making is potentially feasible in business and support the evolution of models that encompass environmental ethics in addition to business ethics. Any ethical or moral framework developed would need to consider the needs of all affected stakeholders (present and future). However, the assumptions underpinning existing decision making would appear to limit this potential [22]. There is much work to be done in this regard.

1.3 The law

A further framework which could be used for decision making is the legal one [23]. Adopting this framework implies that organisations are not able to make moral and ethical decisions with regard to their multiple stakeholders, which given the tensions involved might easily be the case. In this scenario, businesses would be legally constrained to abide by some codified principles of environmental stewardship. In this case, business would have a code of conduct externally applied to their behaviours. As a consequence, business decision making with regard to the environment would not be voluntary - that is a legislative framework must be complied with by law. Compliance with any legislative framework would be enforced and penalties would be commensurate with the ‘crime.’ Unfortunately, an environmental crime is a global one and an international legal framework is yet to be established. Therefore, how do businesses make ethically sound, environmentally responsible, socially principled, financially sustainable decisions? Which framework is ‘best’ in the given circumstances, and how would an
organisation choose between them? The truth is, we don’t know the answer to this question and we have yet to have agreement that we need to seek an answer. However, given the divergent paradigms at play here, we are unlikely to be spending research effort wisely if the current state of knowledge continues to expand with such rapid diversity.

1.4 The problem of a successful framework

The principles underpinning ethics and ethical business decision making do not appear to value the profit maximisation motive although this may change as more authors begin to challenge the assumptions that making a profit is not ethical (see for example [24,25]. There is some recent work in the area of the ‘morality of profit making’ but this is not yet incorporated into general practice [26], and is unlikely to be in the short term, considering the current global financial crisis. Furthermore, as ethical and moral frameworks can be culturally bound [27,28,29] it is also not surprising that international legal frameworks are yet to be established (the Kyoto Protocol and Copenhagen 2009 notwithstanding).

There is a growing trend to incorporate CSR within marketing frameworks. However, even this will not address the issues if the domain is as clouded as suggested by Horrigan [8] and Dahlsrud [30]. These authors indicate a high degree of variability in the way the term CSR is used by scholars and practitioners alike. Indeed, adding marketing to the mix of CSR is likely to further muddy the waters. It would be difficult to justify producing a cheap and inefficient air conditioner on any environmental grounds but some consumers definitely want them and the shareholders of electrical manufacturers make profits from these wants. Is it ethically (morally or socially) responsible to provide the customer with what they want at a profit, thereby undermining environmental efforts made elsewhere?

Is there such a thing as an ethical framework that incorporates the environment? Or are we doomed, as suggested by O’Brien ([31] p. 25), to ‘moral belly button gazing’ because being ‘good’ is too difficult in the current business context? It is not clear if one framework will best enable appropriate decision making. If a combination of factors is required, which, if any, of the existing frameworks will be most useful? CSR? Ethics? The law? In order to respond to this question, we need to understand which of these frameworks is most developed in terms of incorporating environmental sustainability into decision making that concerns strategic directions being planned by business. Further, we need to understand how our top organisations are responding to the exigencies of the current environmental context. How close are we to sustainability?

2. Methodology

In order to explore the context of organisational decision making regarding environmental sustainability issues, the above three dimensions were investigated through a content analysis of exemplar organisational websites. Data were collected from the websites of the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) Top 30 in December 2009. The ASX ‘Top’ organizations can be considered to be archetypes of organizational performance at any particular time although their relative ranking does change depending on the economic climate and company activities. The selected websites were analysed looking for visible statements of activities and artefacts that were categorised as: corporate social responsibility, codes of conduct (which we assume to be evidenced by ethical frameworks) and environmental sustainability or green activities of these businesses. Frequency counts were used to analyse how often these dimensions are invoked and these are expressed as a percentage of the total number of websites.
examined. The analysis was based in the following (highly arguable) assumptions as shown in Table 1. Judgement was used to ascertain whether the evidence on the webpage met the criteria for the dimension being assessed. Statements such as, ‘Our corporate responsibility is to customers, shareholders, employees, the community and the environment’ (Telstra, 2008) was an example that the details would meet the criteria for dimension No.2 (Table 1). Some firms referred to their care for the environment in statements such as ‘We aim to achieve a high standard of care for the natural environment in all activities in which we engage’ (Ozminerals, 2009). This firm would meet commitment No. 2 (Table 1). However, this webpage did not include specific information about these activities and therefore would not meet the requirements for dimension No.4 (Table 1).

Similar judgements were required for the other dimensions as shown in Table 1. The research team jointly conducted the analysis and debated categorisation of the data and statements where disagreement arose about the context and content of the material. Areas where there was sustained ambiguity (where consensus between researchers could not be achieved) were excluded. There may be much information that is not readily available from websites. However, the purpose of this exploration was to ascertain the readily available ‘public’ position of these organizations in relation to environmental sustainability.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis shows that the existing activities described as CSR, environmental sustainability and ethical codes of conduct are to a large degree not congruent with each other. There is very limited convergence between the concepts and the actions of the Top 30. In addition, there was very little evidence of environmental action beyond that required by the legal framework. We take this as verification that the Top 30 organisations are not yet able to establish practices beyond the legal requirements that are consistent with environmental sustainability. This demonstrates that there is an urgent need for academic debate about which framework will provide a basis for business decision making with regard to the environment.

Table 1
Dimensions, their underlying assumptions and results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Percent of Top 30 indicating (rounded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Growth as a key objective</td>
<td>A high growth strategy is not environmentally sustainable</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Level of commitment to environmental issues in the annual report</td>
<td>More overt commitment is better than none or low levels</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Existence of a public code of conduct</td>
<td>For ethical standards to prevail (as opposed to moral ones) there must be a formal statement of ethics and/or an ethical code of conduct.</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Number and type of environmental issues</td>
<td>If there are more environmental activities occurring, the organisation will be better than if</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
incorporated in the code of conduct no activities are occurring.

5. Use of triple-bottom-line reporting
If an organisation is using ‘triple bottom line’ (TBL) reporting, there will be more activities and TBL is indicative of a commitment to the environment. 27%

6. Expressed willingness to trade off profit for the environment
Firms with a willingness to trade off profitability in order to improve their environmental actions are more environmentally friendly. 0%

7. Total lifecycle considerations
Organisations which have established total-life-cycle management for their products and services are more environmentally sustainable. 20%

8. CSR activities
CSR activities will of necessity contain an environmental dimension. 39%

### 3.1 Dimension 1: Growth as a key objective

The majority of firms indicated growth as a key objective. The implication of growth as a key objective is problematic from an environmental sustainability perspective: growth at all costs is oxymoronic to preservation of natural assets. A clash of stakeholder values inevitably ensues when financially focused stakeholders align with stakeholders prioritising social and environmental sustainability. Whilst the assumption made that high growth strategy is not environmentally sustainable, some firms perceive environmental hurdles as ‘fixable’. For example, BHP Chairman Don Argus, addressed shareholders acknowledging that the ‘immediate issue facing the world is climate change’ and concluded BHP Billiton shares the view that ‘the problem is solvable’ (BHP 2009) thereby not compromising growth objectives. He does not, however, make any suggestions as to how the problem of global climate change can be resolved, nor what BHP Billiton’s role in the potential solution might be.

### 3.2 Dimension 2: Level of commitment to environmental issues in the annual report

Companies were analysed according to level of commitment presented within their annual report. Companies regarded as presenting negligible to low commitment had one generic paragraph or similar whilst a medium level of commitment meant an awareness of environmental issues/impact recognised, CSR activities and an expression of compliance with Government regulations. Companies with a high level of commitment had measurable goals and objectives with analysis, implemented policy, and a proactive attitude towards environmental sustainability. That is, they went beyond compliance in their articulated aims.

Over 30% of firms analysed indicated minimal environmentally related reporting. However, those companies with negligible to no sustainability or CSR activity with environmental focus instead offered community engagement through charities, sponsorship or sport. Less than 10% of firms engaged in perceived high level commitment to environmental issues. This suggests an opportunity for firms to become more public in their expressions of environmental concern. We hope that the lack of articulation is not representative of a lack of concern for the environment.
Leading the way in demonstrating concern for the environment are the firms promoting environmental sustainability, who instigate projects, policies and engage in environmental partnerships. For example, Lend Lease (p.22) committed itself to the Clinton Climate Initiative, has two of the 16 Climate Positive Development projects in ten countries across six continents, worked on the development of reporting standards for international greenhouse gas emissions and partnered with Lincolne Scott’s Efficient Building Scheme (Lend Lease 2009). There are very few of these examples and the findings may indicate stakeholders not requiring environmental sustainability based information and/or firms not accounting for it in annual reports. However, since 2005 many ASX listed firms have introduced CSR or sustainability reports. Whilst heterogeneous and spasmodic in approach, the reports embody a positive foundation for implanting sustainability in business strategies in the future.

3.3 Dimension 3: Existence of a public code of conduct & Dimension 4: Number and type of environmental issues incorporated in the code of conduct

A code of conduct for firms encompasses a 'statement and description of required behaviours, responsibilities and actions expected' (Bnet 2009). The website analysis indicated the majority of firms possessed a published code of conduct. The high incidence (90%) of companies adopting a code of conduct illustrates a preparedness to formally benchmark the firm’s standing on acceptable company behaviour and standards.

Despite a majority of firms featuring codes of conduct in their websites, fewer than 35% have specified expectations of conduct pertaining to environmental issues within the published codes. Many firms’ codes of conduct were categorical on conflicts of interest; compliance with laws and financial inducements yet presented ambiguous content regarding commitment to the environment. Where environmental issues are adduced, they are generic and lack specific environmental goals or strategies. In the organizations in this study, this was typical of demonstrated corporate commitment to environment: generic, yet unquantifiable and not specific enough to be evaluated in any concrete way. Perhaps, this could be due to an unwillingness to be held accountable at some future date. However, some firms have interwove environmental action into codes of conduct successfully. Lend Lease’s code of conduct embraces environmental considerations more definitively stating:

‘We must ensure sustainable outcomes for our stakeholders before making business decisions. We must ensure health and safety issues and social and environmental impacts are given full consideration when making business decisions. It is imperative our business decisions do not compromise our vision of becoming a sustainable organisation’ (Lend Lease 2009).

Similarly, Westpac has initiated Principles of Doing Business that incorporate ethics, environment and community standards aligned with a code of conduct (Westpac 2008). Westpac also insists its suppliers adhere to Westpac’s Sustainable Supply Chain Management (SSCM) code of conduct as part of responsible business practices. Westpac’s early adopted environmental orientation could proffer an appropriate model to benchmark environmental sustainability corporate standards.

3.4 Dimension 5: Use of triple-bottom-line reporting
Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting is characterised by corporate transparency transcending traditional indicators of financial performance, measuring economic, environmental and social/ethical contributions equally [32]. Pava [33] branded TBL ‘unfeasible’ due to the inability to accurately evaluate social or environmental bottom lines through methodology or formula which may account for the low number of firms who commit to this approach.

In this study, fewer than 30% of analysed firms utilise a TBL approach to assess business performance thereby emphasising a focus on financial priorities. This significant 70% rate supports the findings of Dimension 1 - that social and environmental considerations remain a lesser agenda where growth is a key objective in a firm. Firms implementing TBL reporting tended to be sustainability focussed banking corporations (Westpac, NAB) with ‘dedicated, long term initiatives including community projects, indigenous issues, responsible business lending and partnerships and environmental strategies’ (Westpac 2009). Furthermore there was a trend for firms instigating a TBL performance measurement to also have environmental standards incorporated into company codes of conduct, annual reporting and CSR activities. Of course, it could be argued that for financial institutions it is relatively easy to appear environmentally sustainable, as the impact of the firm’s activities is not as readily accountable in environmental terms. As a consequence, banks are more willing to make public statements regarding environmental issues.

Several of the firms that appeared to be TBL orientated in their overt statements about their activities, lacked a clear and direct application of such activities to environmental issues. In these cases, when the firm failed to fulfil any environmental aspects of the TBL approach, they attempted to promote social focus activities and community charities as their CSR contribution. Thus demonstrating their social responsibility in matters other than the environment.

3.5 Dimension 6: Expressed willingness to trade off profit for the environment

None of the firm's analysed expressed any willingness to trade off profit for the environment. Such a result reinforces the monumental shift required in the corporate consciousness to implant sustainability thinking into business strategies. When considered in relation to shareholders (these are ASX listed companies after all), it does not seem likely that a company would publicly divulge such a willingness lest it create tension between the organisation and their financially focused stakeholders.

One firm’s response to the Australian Federal Government proposed 2011 commencement of Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) was that it created 'key sources of uncertainty'. Others allude to an apprehension to consider trading off profit for the environment. They express deep reservations regarding the costs of trading schemes and the subsequent impact on the competitive environment: the Tragedy of the Commons comes to mind [34]. It would seem that even given the global focus on climate change and environmental issues, business is not yet ready to take steps that will benefit abstract ‘others’ at the expense of profit margins or shareholder value. Clearly, we cannot rely on moral frameworks for positive action to occur in this domain.

3.6 Dimension 7: Total lifecycle considerations
In this dimension, firms were considered to have low total lifecycle considerations when they indicated minimum action, minimum requirements and generic concerns. Firms categorised as medium had projects, fulfilled Government requirements, recycling initiatives and some goals. The firms that showed a high level of consideration had a proactive attitude, had water, packaging and recycling policies and had established environmental partnerships. Less than 20% of firms assessed engaged in a high level of total lifecycle considerations, indicating 80% of firms are potentially not considering the whole life cycle chain in their business practices. This is surprising given the various Australian governments’ stated policies in this regard. Of note, is the one firm providing information regarding their environmental impact including consideration of lifecycle being The New Zealand telecommunications firm Telecom NZ. Telecom NZ have been ‘measuring [their] carbon footprint since 2007 and run power saving programmes’. They also ‘supplement the mains power usage of [their] network with 200 solar-powered sites and 20 sites using wind generated power.’ (Telecom NZ 2009).

3.7 Dimension 8: CSR activities

O’Brien [35] interpreted the traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model as a method of strategic philanthropy with CSR projects involving a combination of cash grants, product donations and employee volunteerism. In this study, most CSR activities had a tendency to align with community development initiatives and not environmental issues. It would appear that environmental considerations are not included in the scope of ‘social’ responsibility issues. Where there were statements included, they tended to be generic with no specific activities associated with them. Although, it could be argued that digging wells for impoverished African villagers is an environmental action.

As an example of the type of activity incorporated under the CSR banner, between 2008/9 BHP Billiton CSR’s ‘expenditure by program category’ reinforced BHP’s altruistic focus; 51% of investment to community development, 22% to education, 24% combined to health, arts, sport and other and the remaining 3% investment expenditure to environment (BHP Billiton 2009). BHP also has a Sustainable Communities program (statement made in annual report). However, it is not clear what this program entails or even if it relates to environmental issues.

Allowing employees time off to participate in publicly minded activities is a key method of contributing to the fabric of the society. Some firms encouraged employee engagement in environmentally friendly public activities including Clean Up Australia Day (Qantas 2009), Earth Hour (Westfield 2009) or donations to Wildlife Rescuers (Stockland 2009). To a certain extent, this indirect activity contributes to the environment but might also be considered simply as allowing volunteering. Others, such as Westpac, are more directly involved in environmental issues. Westpac have developed national partnerships with Landcare (including Carbon Smart program), industry focused agribusiness workshops and drought initiatives (Westpac 2009).

Overall, our analysis suggests a lowly perceived consideration for environmental dimensions in comparison to other CSR strategies such as engagement with sports and charities. Potentially, these results reflect the firms’ lack of clarity of environmental sustainability requirements. However, the finding may raise questionability of firms instigating genuine CSR and likelihood that firms may be harnessing CSR as another vehicle for marketing. CSR may be interpreted as promoting company public and community relations. Sponsorships and events offer opportunities for firms to enjoy some...
return on community investment (financial or in-kind support) whilst promoting brand awareness and marketing interaction.

As environmentally sustainable business initiatives present a challenge to ‘value’ for CSR purposes, an opportunity exists to implement a contemporary CSR blueprint that incorporates the environment.

Finally, the concept of the environment is ambiguous and most often appears within the realm of Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S). The majority of the firm's annual reports precede the term 'environment' with economic, marketplace, workplace, operating, competitive, current, risk, legal, business, regulatory, control, market, natural or capital. Environmental action and activity are presented most often as a generic paragraph within the annual report. Similarly, there appeared to be no benchmark or consistent approach towards corporate environmental strategy of the companies. Some firms were proactively engaged in environmental policy including managing waste, recycling, packaging, energy and water (Telstra 2009) or establishing company environmental ethics, principles, government reporting, policy and reporting mechanisms (Westpac 2009). Other firms failed to provide evidence of environmental implementation and it was judged that this practice was not occurring. Coupled with this is that there is a certain amount of confusion as to what to measure and include in reports. Generic paragraphs and sentences within an annual report show that companies are unaware of what to report and how much detail is required in their reports.

4. Conclusion

While we accept that this is a necessarily surface treatment of what are deeply controversial issues, it is evident from this exploration that there is much work to be done with regard to business’ adoption of environmentally sustainable practice. It is interesting, that given the opportunity of presenting to the world via their websites, that business does not even claim to be environmentally responsible except as rhetoric.

Importantly, the lack of specificity in environmental action is of concern. It is possible that it is simply too complicated, as suggested by O’Brien (2009), and that we are doomed to inaction because of an inability to engage with the major competing priorities with which we are presented. The lack of specificity might also be indicative of a fear of being held accountable for the success or failure of particular activities. CSR activities are, of necessity, ‘hopeful’ of making a positive impact. In business is it is not usual to undertake an activity in the hope that it will work – most boards would expect an accountable and measurable outcome associated with an investment. We argue that a bit of hope might be a good thing when it comes to making a difference.

It is apparent that there is profound confusion about what constitutes environmental or social responsibility. Legislative frameworks are restrictive and are not suggested as a solution to this problem but they are at least clear and easy to understand (usually). The moral frameworks (as evidenced by the codes of conduct) in the main do not contain environmental statements. However, the fact that they exist when not actually required by law is positive. Such confusion cannot be helpful for business when deciding amongst the myriad of opportunities that present themselves. In this case, self-interest is most likely to prevail.
If the public face of the Top 30, as expressed in their websites, is not providing evidence of sustainability by implication this is not occurring in practice. This suggests that research into what might be an acceptable common framework for business decision making is urgently needed. Environmental sustainability will not come about through serendipity. If legislation is required to effect change, some upstream marketing may be required. If a code of conduct will provide the framework, this needs to be developed in conjunction with the stakeholders based on some clear theoretically sound principles. However, each of these will require an inter-disciplinary approach. Specifically, we propose that the eight dimensions (Table 1) and their underlying assumptions are tested through further research. These firms may be practising a form of green-washing, either deliberately or otherwise; if so, this practice should be exposed, enlightenment provided and guidelines provided for the various stakeholders.

Acknowledgements:
We would like to thank Monika Bognar for her assistance in the preparation of this paper.

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