

Environment and Sustainability Policy

1. Rationale and Scope

1.1. Rationale

The University of New England is an integral part of the New England region. It has a diverse natural environment, a rich cultural heritage with strong links to local, rural communities. In this regard it has a special responsibility to conduct its activities in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner. It seeks to be a leader in environmental 'Best Practice' and in leading rural communities towards a more sustainable future.

The University recognises its responsibility, as part of the global community and as an educator of future leaders, to encourage and show leadership in the use of ecologically sustainable practices that will help preserve our environment for current and future generations. This is in keeping with global concerns and the increasing demands from government and of the wider community for environmental protection and sustainability.

The University also recognises and understands its potential impact on the environment, and that a systematic approach is necessary to avoid or limit such impacts. The University also understands the legal framework within which it must operate.

1.2. Definition of Sustainability

Sustainability, also more recently referred to as 'sustainable development', came from the idea of integrating economic development and environmental protection. The concept is based on the recognition that the earth's resources are finite and through a better understanding of the global environment, steps should be taken to halt and reverse the negative impacts of human development.

In Australia, the concept has embraced an ecological focus and the Australian National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development defines ESD as:

"Development that improves the quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends"

For the purposes of this policy, the University will embrace the above mentioned definition for ESD and its four broad objectives of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability.

1.3. Scope

This policy statement will provide a broad framework for guiding environmentally responsible and sustainable practices and outlines, in general terms, the commitment of UNE to the concept of ESD. The specific guidelines and procedures developed within this framework will form an integral part of the management practices in all areas and at all levels within the University.

This policy will be implemented at UNE through an Environmental Management Plan to ensure that UNE meets the legal requirements as defined in the 'Register of Legal and Other Requirements' (NSW State legislation) and the other broad policy objectives contained in this document.

For the purposes of this policy, 'The University' means all University of New England campuses and its Rural Properties. It will apply to its staff, students, contractors and sub-contractors.

2. Principles

The following principles support the University's Environment and Sustainability Policy and should be considered as a basis for all University activities and operations

- 'Continual Improvement' of environmental performance is a priority with the legal requirements as a base
- All members of the UNE community are responsible for monitoring their activities and acting in accordance with this policy
- Decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement in issues which affect them
- The University will utilise its educational, research and resource management activities and profile to encourage environmental best practice among staff, students and the communities served by the University
- The '*Precautionary Principle*'
Where uncertainties exist in relation to environmental impacts, the University will take measures to identify alternative courses of action or to minimise environmental damage

3. The Policy

3.1. The University will comply in all respects with environmental laws and regulations that apply to its facilities, activities and operations and will monitor and respond to changes in these laws

3.2. The University is committed to, and will develop strategies for, the protection of our environment. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, the key areas of:

- Waste minimisation through reduce, reuse and recycle
- Waste disposal including hazardous waste
- Water management – efficiency and stormwater
- Protection and rehabilitation of native flora, fauna and ecosystems

3.3. The University is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its activities and enhancing sustainability through the efficient use of its energy and resources

3.4. The University will actively promote and encourage an ethos of environmental awareness and sustainability through training and general education of staff, students and the wider University community

3.5. The University is committed to integrating sustainability into the full range of its activities and operations and within its available resources

3.6. The University will reduce adverse environmental impacts of the built environment by integrating the principles of ESD into all new buildings and minor works projects, through the planning, design and construction processes

4. Procedures

Compliance

4.1. A 'Register of Legal and Other Requirements' (NSW State Legislation) will be kept and maintained (TRIM ref D04/2861)

4.1.1. The Environmental Officer will update the register and communicate changes to the relevant levels of management

Implementation

4.2. An Environmental Management Program will be established and endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor that, identifies key program areas, plans with clear objectives and targets, identifies operational responsibilities, allocates resources and sets time lines

4.3. The Environmental Management Program will make provisions for monitoring and evaluation

Reporting

4.4. A report against compliance will be provided to the University Audit and Compliance Committee every six months

- 4.5. The Environmental Officer will report (Bi-monthly) to the Buildings and Grounds Committee on progress of Environmental Management Program and other relevant environmental issues and projects
- 4.6. An environmental report will be prepared for the University against objectives and targets of the Environmental Management Program

Further Information

Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) homepage
www.acts.unsw.edu.au/

Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), State of the Environment Report for 2003 (SoE 2003).
www.environment.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2003/

International Institute for Sustainable Development, declarations for sustainable development: the response of universities
www.iisd.org/educate/declare

Protection of the Environment Administrations Act (1991), Section 6(2) Objectives of the Authority – Definition of ESD
www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0

Protection of the Environment Operations Act (1997), NSW State Legislation
www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/maintop/scanact/inforce/NONE/0

The Australian Government, Department of the Environment and Heritage. Ecologically Sustainable Development www.deh.gov.au/esd/

The International Association of Universities (IUA) homepage
www.unesco.org/iau/

University Leaders for a Sustainable Future homepage www.ulsf.org/

ANNEXURE 1. Related UNE Policies and Documents

University Design Standards and Procedures Manual (TRIM ref: D04/8007)

Describes the UNE minimum requirements for design, construction and maintenance of its facilities

Energy Management Policy (TRIM ref: D03/2140)

Sets the framework for the efficient use of energy at UNE

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Responsibility for review: Environmental Officer

Related policies or other documents: UNE Strategic Plan; Energy Management Policy; Register of Legal and Other Requirements (NSW State Legislation); University Design Standards and Procedures Manual