

Sustainability Policy

Byron Community College

Draft: May 2012

Date adopted: September 2012

Preamble

The philosophy of sustainability requires recognition that all decisions and actions have an impact on present and future generations. This policy recognises that as an Adult Community College we have an important role in fostering behavioural change towards social, economic and environmental sustainability and in building skill development for a low carbon future. It also recognises that our not-for-profit Community College has a role in building community capital and community resilience and in fostering a culture of sustainability.

Byron Community College became a signatory to international Talloires declaration on campus sustainability in February 2012, this commits the college to 10 areas of action (see Appendix 1). We are also signatories and active participant in the Sustain Northern Rivers collaboration (see Appendix 2) to enhance regional responses to climate change mitigation and adaption. The employment of a part time Sustainability Officer in May 2008 enabled us to focus on sustainability improvements, support training and undertake projects that supports and catalyses our commitment to sustainability.

This policy outlines our commitments to support values and an ethos promoting sustainability, improving campus sustainability practices, building sustainability literacy through the content of our learning programs, participating in broader sustainability educational research and development projects, and in taking part in collaborations with other community and government partnerships.

Policy Objectives

1. Formalise the Colleges sustainability philosophy across the organisation.
2. Continually improve the sustainability performance across all operations of the College by reducing our ecological footprint including energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, waste generation, resource consumptions and water consumption.
3. Support the efforts of the wider community in the transition to a low carbon community by fostering greater awareness, education, research and skills development.
4. Acknowledge the interrelationship between social, economic and environmental considerations in all decision making.
5. Provide leadership to the local and broader community including the educational community.
6. Build and strengthen partnerships with regional and national organisations that have similar objectives.

Byron Community College Commitments

Sustainable Procurement: The selection of office supplies, catering supplies and electronic equipment etc. should incorporate sustainability considerations and give preference for more sustainable products as they become available. We will stock 100% recycled envelopes, photocopy paper, toilet paper and hand paper with high recycled content.

Waste Management: We will seek an overall reduction in waste, especially waste going to landfill. We will increase rates of recycling, sell 'keep cups' to encourage their use for take away drinks by students and staff, decrease organics going to landfill by introducing a worm habitat for the whole complex

and provide a bokashi bin for staff. Disposal of e waste and batteries will be in the dedicated shire disposal sites. We will undertake measures to progressively reduce paper use.

Catering: Regular refreshment supplies will be organic or fair trade teas and coffees. In catering for events, preference should be given to locally grown foods and value added products using organic or fair trade supplies where possible. We will preference local caterers, undertake waste minimisation and promote waste awareness among participants.

Water Efficiency: We will seek to conserve water. All leaks should be reported promptly to maintenance staff. We will use water conserving equipment such as the waterless urinals, water efficient dual flush toilets and low flow taps in our own buildings. We will collect and reuse rainwater on our gardens.

Programming: We will progressively integrate sustainability into all learning programs in both streams of our programming. The college will provide a variety of “living and working sustainably” courses each term and seek to find sources of subsidy to keep the prices lower than our other general courses. We will actively seek out and offer accredited sustainability skill sets and increase qualifications that provide skill development in sustainability. In doing so, we will integrate the principles of education for sustainability (EFS) in designing learning activities. We will keep up to date with relevant government policies and funding programs.

Staff Orientation & Professional Development: We aim to involve all staff in sustainable behaviours and have this be supported by the Committee and management. We will undertake activities that encourage staff to change practices and to keep learning about sustainability. In order to do this, we will undertake to communicate our sustainability commitment in job descriptions, orientation documents and discussions, provide opportunities for staff to attend professional development courses that include sustainability and provide in-service training. We will discuss practical sustainability improvements at regular staff meetings.

We will undertake a yearly review of our practices with consultation with staff on ways we could improve our sustainability performance.

Trainer Orientation & Training: We aim to involve all tutors and trainers in sustainable behaviours on campus (and beyond) and for them to encourage their students to do so too with effective orientation and information. We will provide training for trainers in integrating sustainability into learning programs and in the principles of education for sustainability.

Student Orientation & Training: We will provide information on our sustainability commitment and specific practices in the orientation video, student handbook, and college signage which include introduction to waste management systems, energy efficiency, paper use, encouragement to apply for student public transport concession cards etc.

Marketing: We wish to be seen as a community leader in building sustainability through education and participation. To this end we will communicate our commitment to sustainability on our web site and on our documents, in media stories that provide information and tell positive stories about sustainable living and working as well as encourage enrolment in sustainability training.

Governance: The sustainability officer should meet at least once per year with the Committee to report on developments and issues, and build sustainability into the College strategic goals and yearly planning cycle. The Committee will consider budgeting allocations to annual sustainability programs, projects and staff as part of its mainstream investment. We will establish some appropriate sustainability benchmarks to report on. We will endeavour to support some Committee members who have a well-developed specialist understanding and commitment to sustainability, and encourage all Committee members to engage with sustainability issues and strategic directions.

Campus Cleaning: We will use non-toxic products for cleaning and hygiene throughout the campus. We will undertake orientation of all cleaners to the waste management system, how to set up restocking of supplies to encourage reusable cups, spoons etc. rather than disposables. We will communicate appropriate use of common areas with tenants, landlords and neighbours regarding waste management.

We will undertake ongoing monitoring of waste management performance.

Renovations & Development: In undertaking maintenance, renovations or establishing new facilities we will make builders and designers aware of our commitments to sustainability. Passive solar design will be used where possible. We will specify the use of non VOC paints and the choice of materials with more sustainable features for instance materials with recycled content, local manufacture or other environmental benefits. We will purchase energy and water efficient equipment. We will communicate our choices as part of our education of the building users.

We will grow some edible food and tea species on campus encourage their use. Landscaping should include indigenous species.

Energy Efficiency: We will monitor our generation of renewable solar energy and our energy consumption. We will provide information to all building users on efficient use of air con, lighting and equipment with signage and as part of orientation of staff, students and new tutors. We will seek funding for expansion of solar panels and retrofitting for the CLIC business incubator spaces.

Transport: We will provide bike parking at our Mullumbimby campus with prominent signage. The college will encourage use of public transport, where available, by keeping up to date copies of bus timetables in our foyers and encouragement to apply for student public transport concession cards etc. Although the college is not in a position to arrange carpooling or give out personal details, we can support carpooling by other means. We will display posters with information about the Northern Rivers Car Pool website on our campuses. We can also provide carpooling and public transport web links on our website. We will encourage trainers to raise the option of carpooling with students in longer courses, where they can make private arrangements based on having met fellow students. When new vehicles for the college are being purchased, fuel efficiency should be taken into consideration.

Project Development: College should keep abreast of (and lobby for) developments in funding opportunities for sustainability education and research projects.

Community Support & Partnerships: We will position the college as a significant player in the region in identifying and meeting future skills needs for a shift to a low carbon future and supporting sustainable living and working. We will participate in the Sustain Northern Rivers collaboration and regional projects and actively contribute to further the resilience of the local community and further the development of the broader low carbon skills development agenda.

We will maintain our partnerships with the Byron Shire Council and Mullumbimby Community Garden in particular and work with Brunswick Valley Landcare, Transition Byron, local farmers markets and other groups to support sustainability education initiatives. We will support the building of community capital by offering course vouchers as prizes, sponsorship of events and use of our buildings, when practical. We will select non accredited courses from the living and working sustainably section and across the wider program to subsidise. This would be done to promote access by low income groups and promote social justice and community building. A statement will be inserted such as: "this course is subsidised by the college in the public interest". We will provide an outlet for Byron Shire Council community information on sustainability and other issues by displaying their material in our foyers.

We will be active in Community Colleges Australia, Cooperative Learning Ltd, Adult Learning Australia and other groups to influence the uptake of sustainability programs and campus practices by taking a proactive stance on sustainability improvements and promote the provision of sustainability related learning opportunities.

Appendix 1: Background to the [Talloires Declaration](#) to which we are a signatory.

The mission of the international **Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF)** is to support sustainability as a critical focus of teaching, research, operations and outreach at colleges and universities worldwide through publications, research, and assessment.

ULSF also serves as the Secretariat for signatories of the [Talloires Declaration](#), a ten-point action plan committing institutions to sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching and practice. Over 350 university and college presidents and chancellors in more than 40 countries have signed the Declaration.

Rationale

Higher education is beginning to recognize the need to reflect the reality that humanity is affecting the environment in ways which are historically unprecedented and which are potentially devastating for both natural ecosystems and ourselves. Since colleges and universities are an integral part of the global economy and since they prepare most of the professionals who develop, manage and teach in society's public, private and non-governmental institutions, they are uniquely positioned to influence the direction we choose to take as a society. As major contributors to the values, health and well being of society, higher education has a fundamental responsibility to teach, train and do research for sustainability. We believe that the success of higher education in the twenty-first century will be judged by our ability to put forward a bold agenda that makes sustainability and the environment a cornerstone of academic practice.

THE TALLOIRES DECLARATION

We, the presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors of universities and colleges from all regions of the world are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of environmental pollution and degradation, and the depletion of natural resources.

Local, regional, and global air and water pollution; accumulation and distribution of toxic wastes; destruction and depletion of forests, soil, and water; depletion of the ozone layer and emission of "greenhouse" gases threaten the survival of humans and thousands of other living species, the integrity of the earth and its biodiversity, the security of nations, and the heritage of future generations. These environmental changes are caused by inequitable and unsustainable production and consumption patterns that aggravate poverty in many regions of the world.

We believe that urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse the trends. Stabilization of human population, adoption of environmentally sound industrial and agricultural technologies, reforestation, and ecological restoration are crucial elements in creating an equitable and sustainable future for all humankind in harmony with nature.

Universities and colleges have a major role in the education, research, policy formation, and information exchange necessary to make these goals possible. Thus, educational leaders must initiate and support mobilization of internal and external resources so that their institutions respond to this urgent challenge.

We, therefore, agree to take the following actions:

1. Increase Awareness of Environmentally Sustainable Development

Use every opportunity to raise public, government, industry, foundation, and university/college awareness by openly addressing the urgent need to move toward an environmentally sustainable future.

2. Create an Institutional Culture of Sustainability

Encourage all universities and colleges to engage in education, research, policy formation, and information exchange on population, environment, and development to move toward global sustainability.

3. Educate for Environmentally Responsible Citizenship

Establish programs to produce expertise in environmental management, sustainable economic development, population, and related fields to ensure that all graduates are environmentally literate and have the awareness and understanding to be ecologically responsible citizens.

4. Foster Environmental Literacy for All

Create programs to develop the capability of educational faculty to teach environmental literacy to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.

5. Practice Institutional Ecology

Set an example of environmental responsibility by establishing institutional ecology policies and practices of resource conservation, recycling, waste reduction, and environmentally sound operations.

6. Involve All Stakeholders

Encourage involvement of government, foundations, and industry in supporting interdisciplinary research, education, policy formation, and information exchange in environmentally sustainable development. Expand work with community and nongovernmental organizations to assist in finding solutions to environmental problems.

7. Collaborate for Interdisciplinary Approaches

Convene educational faculty and administrators with environmental practitioners to develop interdisciplinary approaches to curricula, research initiatives, operations, and outreach activities that support an environmentally sustainable future.

8. Enhance Capacity of Primary and Secondary Schools

Establish partnerships with primary and secondary schools to help develop the capacity for interdisciplinary teaching about population, environment, and sustainable development.

9. Broaden Service and Outreach Nationally and Internationally

Work with national and international organizations to promote a worldwide higher education sector effort toward a sustainable future.

10. Maintain the Movement

Establish a Secretariat and a steering committee to continue this momentum, and to inform and support each other's efforts in carrying out this declaration.

Appendix 2:

Background information on the **Sustain Northern Rivers Collaboration** to which we are a signatory.

Sustain Northern Rivers (SNR) was formed in 2008 in direct response to climate change. It is a collaboration of 20 peak regional organisations working together to provide a local response to a global threat. SNR is a collaborative platform that consults, communicates and collaborates on actions. Our aim is to empower local communities to become self-sustaining. Our focus is on food, transport, energy, biodiversity and behavioural change.

Some of the other signatories and collaborators are:

Byron Shire Council, Southern Cross University, Lismore City Council, Local Community Services Association, Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority, North Coast Health Promotion, North Coast TA FE, North East Waste Forum, Northern Rivers Community Colleges, Northern Rivers Social Development Council, Northern Rivers Tourism, Northern Star Newspapers Pty Ltd, Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health, NSW Department of Industry and Investment, NSW Department of Education and Training, Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers Richmond Valley Council, Tweed Shire Council, Youth Environment Society.

What does SNR do?

SNR assembles networks and accelerates regional change. It creates a dense network of organizations to bridge gaps creating a force that is larger than the sum of its parts. SNR has a set of clear objectives to:

- Help Northern Rivers communities live and work more sustainably
- Cut the collective carbon footprint of the Northern Rivers
- Foster networks that stimulate innovation and action
- Facilitate collaboration amongst regional organisations
- Pool resources, share knowledge and learn from past failures and successes
- Build the adaptive capacity of Northern Rivers communities
- Maximise outcomes by co-ordinating efforts
- Accelerate change by sharing innovation
- Sustain outcomes from time-limited project grants