

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY IN AUSTRALIA

Business and Industry Stakeholder Forum

**Thursday 29th March 2007
University of Technology Sydney**

Report



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Abbreviations

ARIES	Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability
DEW	Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation NSW
EE	Environmental Education
EfS	Education for Sustainability
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
HR	Human Resources
NAP	National Action Plan
OH&S	Occupational Health and Safety
SME's	Small and medium enterprises

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES) recently completed a study entitled '*A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution to Sustainability in Australia: Business and Industry Education*' undertaken for the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEH) and funded through the Natural Heritage Trust. The research was conducted to inform the Australian Government's strategy which seeks to mainstream sustainability approaches within education, training and capacity building.

The first of its kind undertaken in Australia, the research provides a snapshot of the current context across the business and industry sector and identifies a number of key themes to construct a picture of Environmental Education (EE) experiences. The report also makes a number of key policy, practice and research recommendations that could strengthen the contribution of EE towards sustainability within the business and industry sector.

Key stakeholders from across the business and industry sector were invited to attend a Forum on Thursday 29th March 2007 in Sydney to discuss the findings of the report. This Forum was hosted by the Department of Environment and Conservation NSW (DEC). It provided an opportunity to bring together key decision-makers from the business and industry sector to explore ways forward in the area of education and learning for sustainability.

This report is a synopsis of the findings from the Forum dialogue. It summarises the input of the participants who were asked to identify priority actions for government, researchers and educators based upon the report recommendations. Participants also reflected upon next steps and stakeholder responsibilities.

Priority recommendations identified for researchers included the need to investigate approaches to fostering cultural change for sustainability within organisations. Mainstreaming sustainability across business schools and determining employer needs for sustainability were also considered important. A number of new recommendations for researchers were also developed which focus on the development of tools to better engage with supply chains and on addressing the challenges faced by environmental educators in the business and industry sector.

For government, a mentoring program for government staff working with the sector was seen as important although further details regarding the level at which such a program would be targeted was a topic for discussion. New recommendations for government were also developed by participants including the need for cross departmental groups to be established to develop and delivery of education for sustainability and build broader organisational capacity for change. This was seen as important to strengthening the contribution of the business and industry sector to sustainability in Australia.

For the business and industry, mentoring for senior managers from corporate organisations was considered an important means of capacity building although it was recognised that resistance to external consultants remains relatively high within this sector. Support in the form of training for facilitators of informal networks was also seen as important to maximise learning opportunities.

The valuable information arising out of this forum assists ARIES and DEW with the definition of priority actions in the area of policy, practice and research. The forum itself served as a means of advancing EfS in this sector by promoting dialogue surrounding sustainability, facilitating collaborative learning, participation and the development of cross-sectoral partnerships. Stakeholders attending the sessions committed to promoting some of the recommendations and assisting in implementing agreed actions.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The business and industry Stakeholder Forum was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEW) and facilitated by the Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES). The Forum was held on Thursday 29th March 2007 in Sydney and was hosted by the Department of Environment and Conservation NSW (DEC). It provided an opportunity to bring together key decision-makers from the business and industry education sector to explore ways forward in the area of education and learning for sustainability.

The **objectives** of the Forum were:

- To inform the identification of Australian Government priorities. The forum can assist to ensure that future policy is relevant and reflects the requirements of the business and industry sector;
- To contribute to the Australian Government's review of the National Action Plan in Environmental Education (EE); and
- To assist in identifying future research priorities for ARIES that are relevant and represent stakeholder concerns.

The Forum sought a number of **key outcomes**:

- Engagement of the business and industry sector in matters of Education for Sustainability (EfS);
- Establishment of relevant and informed strategic policy, practice and research priorities; and
- Shared ownership in the output of the Forum organisation and outputs.

In addition, the Forum becomes a means of achieving sustainability outcomes through dialogue, collaborative learning, participation and partnership building.

3.0 EVENT FORMAT AND AGENDA

The Stakeholder Forum was facilitated by ARIES in such a way as to encourage dialogue and the active involvement of all attendees. The facilitation also sought to ensure that its output was relevant to the requirements of DEW and ARIES.

The attendees were sent a copy of the 'A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution in Australia: Business and Industry Education key findings prior to the forum and asked if they would read these prior to the event itself.

The four hour forum was largely devoted to two tasks completed by participants in collaborative working groups. The first task involved participants engaging with the report recommendations to identify policy, practice and research priority actions. The second task involved participants identifying next steps to be taken to address these priority recommendations and the stakeholders responsible for implementation.

Dialogue following these activities led to the identification of a number of specific issues and priority actions (see 5.0 key outcomes from Forum Dialogue).

Table 1 Agenda

Time	Item
13.00	Lunch
13.30	Forum introduction and welcome
13.35	Overview/background to the National Review research study
13.40	Presentation: What is ARIES? Key issues in EE for Sustainability in the business and industry sector Overview of research findings
14.00	Group Activity 1 – using recommendations to identify priority actions
15.00	Break
15.15	Group Activity 2 – identifying first steps and stakeholders commitments
16.15	General discussion
16.35	Closing remarks and thanks
16.45	Participant feedback
17.00	Finish

4.0 PARTICIPANTS

Nineteen stakeholders attended the Forum from the business and industry sector. This included representatives from government, corporate organisations as well as professional and industry organisations. The selection of the participants was guided by DEW and DEC.

Table 2 List of Participants

Name	Title	Organisation
Professor Osamu Abe	Japan Council for ESD	Rikkyo University, Japan
Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Benn	School of Management, Faculty of Business	University of Technology Sydney
Greg Bourne	CEO	WWF Australia
Clare Buchanan	Corporate Communications Manager	Woolworths Ltd
Bernard Carlon	Director Business & Community Programs	Dept of Environment and Conservation NSW
Dr Carolyn Hendriks	School of Business and Government	University of Canberra
John Eames	Environmental Education Coordinator	Sydney Water
Anne Fitzgerald	Member Services & Marketing	Clubs NSW
Desiree Luchese	Sustainability Consultant	The Global Carbon Exchange
Margie O'Tarpey	Executive Director	Institute of Public Administration
Robyn Pearson	Director	Sustainable Learning Australasia
Annette Phelps		UrbisJHD
Frouke de Reuver	Senior Project Manager	Dept of Environment and Conservation NSW
Prof. Chris Robinson	Head of School	University of Ballarat School of Business
Dr Fabian Sack	Manager Environment and Sustainability	Sydney Water Corporation
Mike Searles	National Environment Manager	Goodman Fielder
Siobhan Toohill	General Manager CSR & Sustainability	Stockland
David Trewin	Manager Business Partnerships	Dept of Environment and Conservation NSW
Olivia Tyler	National Environment Manager	Coca Cola Amatil

Forum Facilitator, Associate Professor Daniella Tilbury - ARIES Director

Forum Researcher, Rebecca Pearson - ARIES Researcher and Scribe

DEW Representative, Jenny Tomkins, Assistant Director, Sustainability Education Section

5.0 KEY OUTCOMES FROM FORUM DIALOGUE

The following section is a summary of the key findings from the Stakeholder Forum. These findings are based upon the dialogue of participants. This information was collected through the notes of the scribes taken during group discussions and from the notes collected made by participants during the two tasks.

5.1 Priority policy, practice and research recommendations

After discussing the various government, business and research recommendations made by the 'A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution in Australia: Business and Industry Education' report, the following have been identified by attendees as priority actions.

5.1.1. Priority actions for Government:

There were mixed responses among participants regarding the recommendations for government with most being considered mid-term priorities only.

The following recommendation in particular was a topic for discussion:

Mentoring for government

- Fund a **6-month mentoring program for government staff** responsible for designing and delivering business education and training initiatives. The program would be focused on how to facilitate and encourage best practice in sustainability.

Participants in general called for more details on the types of government staff to be targeted by such a mentoring program. Some felt that business and education program leaders would be appropriate whilst others felt that those staff at more senior levels, such as government ministers and CEO's, would be more relevant. A few however, felt that if a mentoring program were to be developed, it should target regulatory bodies rather than government people as this is where the greater need lies.

Recommendations made in the National Review report regarding government policy had mixed responses:

National action plan

Government to develop a **national action plan** in learning *for* sustainability which addresses the needs of business and industry in Australia. Particularly the need to:

- **Focus on change rather than technical knowledge**
The need for **education programs** which provide knowledge and **practical experience** of how to advocate, lead and manage change for sustainability. Education initiatives on compliance, environmental performance and product stewardship are targeted.
- **Move from awareness raising to capacity building tools**
Encourage the development **more targeted tools** which are tailored to specific roles within an organisation. These tools should do more than disseminate information and seek to **build capacity**.
- **Informal learning**
Should a) recognise and support the role of **informal learning** in building sustainability literacy and motivating champions for change and b) encourage **learning networks** rather than ad hoc encounters.

- **Education of stakeholders**

Government policy should support corporate organisations which are developing **supply chain** and **stakeholder initiatives** that promote learning *for* sustainability.

Some participants felt that the National Action Plan (NAP) should not only address the needs of business and industry but also target professional associations for architects, planners and Human Resources (HR) professionals. Others felt that the NAP should also engage the **Australian Government** Department of Education. Whilst the need for education programs which provide knowledge and practical experience of how to advocate, lead and manage change for sustainability were considered important, participants wanted to see these programs targeted towards specific roles within organisations.

There were also a number of new recommendations for government developed by the participants themselves. These were considered to be of high priority:

Government should:

- Provide **support for the establishment of cross departmental groups** to develop and delivery education for sustainability and build a broader organisational capacity for sustainability;
- Provide **executive training and mentoring** on change management for sustainability;
- Provide **education and support** for senior managers and board members on sustainability;
- Provide support on **education for compliance** to business and industry;
- **‘De-mystify’ sustainability jargon** for business and industry stakeholders; and
- Provide greater **government leadership** and **clearer support** for sustainability.

In particular, a cross departmental approach to the development and delivery of education was a key topic for discussion. This was seen as a way in which the business and industry sector could inform a more holistic approach to change and build a broader organisational capacity for sustainability. In many larger organisations, the focus on sustainability is generally on one person in an environmental or sustainability role. It is rare for departments such as marketing, HR and compliance, to be involved in the development of education initiatives. Participants considered HR departments in particular to have an important role in facilitating sustainability. However, this has yet to be fully tapped into. A need exists to engage with these departments using ‘their own language’ and to adopt a different strategy for each areas of an organization - avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.

5.1.2. Priority actions **for researchers**:

The following recommendations made in the National Review report were considered a priority for action by researchers:

Cultural change within organisations

- Investigate the **approaches taken to similar issues (like company OH&S)** to determine how government can most effectively foster cultural change for sustainability within organisations.

Participants wanted greater clarification of who cultural change should be targeted at. A need was also identified for a definition of what is meant by ‘culture’.

Participants discussed the importance of legislation and its impact as a driver of cultural change. Examining existing legislation was considered an important means of developing approaches that foster cultural change within organisations. In particular, the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) model was discussed. Given that OH&S began through legislation, participants felt there would be considerable value in legislation for sustainability. This would provide a means through which sustainability could be 'jump-started' within the business and industry sector. At the current time, interest in sustainability has progressed little beyond simple compliance and the 'ticking of boxes'. Participants expressed frustration that many of those at senior management level still do not have a concrete understanding of what the benefits of sustainability are to their organisations. As a result, opportunities for change within some organisations are still limited.

Needs assessment

- Involve **professional associations in needs assessment research** to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists.

Whilst some participants felt that needs assessment is already happening to a large extent others saw this area as a priority. If professional associations were to be involved in needs assessment research however, it would be particularly important to engage with formal accreditation groups, such as accounting departments as an example.

The following recommendations from the National Review report were also considered to be priorities for researchers:

Mainstream sustainability across business schools

- Fund action research within business schools to **incorporate sustainability into existing courses** and to develop **new core units** with a focus on sustainability

Employer needs

- Build relationships between **VET providers** and selected **industry sustainability leaders** to determine, through sector specific research, **employer needs** to sustainability.

There were mixed responses regarding the following recommendations made by the National Review report:

National Training Packages

- Expand previous research into the environmental components of **National Training Packages** to identify social and other aspects of sustainability and therefore provide a more holistic picture of the EfS currently available.

Whilst participants saw a need to upgrade National Training Packages, they also felt it would be important to undertake research into who uses these packages and who they are developed for. Tailoring National Training Packages to specific sectors, roles and responsibilities was seen as critical.

Development of core competency standards

- Research and develop **core competency standards** in learning for sustainability as part of generic and employability skills offerings.

There was considerable discussion about core competencies in Australia. Some participants were uncertain about the language used in the recommendation itself. The word 'generic' in particular was seen as problematic as participants saw the need for competency standards to be sector specific. As an example, the core competency standards required to produce sustainable engineers will be different to those required for other fields. One group in particular felt that the words *learning for sustainability*

should be replaced with *a dynamic and uncertain globalised world* to reflect the need for core competencies to be made broader given the nature of the world today.

The focus of core competencies in Australia has largely been on those in lower or middle management positions in business and industry. Participants saw the need to shift this focus towards those in senior positions to encourage more of a top-down process. Until company directors and shareholders consider sustainability to be important, as is the case in many European countries, then it simply will not filter down. This is where participants considered education to play a critical role. A useful example was provided by the participant from Woolworths. The CEO of the company has set a car pooling challenge to employees as a means of increasing sustainability. This change at senior management level has ‘unblocked the system’ and is now encouraging change to filter down to all levels of the company.

Most participants felt that the **evaluation of selected resources** and tools for impact and effectiveness was a low priority at this time. There was a sense that participants felt a little worn by this type of research. Similarly, it was felt that funding **longitudinal research to assess employment and careers of business students** was also a low priority. The majority of participants felt that this is already being done to a large extent within the university sector. Given sustainability is not yet truly embedded, others felt that is perhaps a little early for this kind of research.

In addition, a number of participants developed their own recommendations for researchers:

- Develop the means and tools to **engage with supply chain** (SME’s) to motivate (not mandate) change. This could lead to ‘**partnership benefits**’ that would make sustainability affordable and accessible to SME’s;
- Research **alternative ways and discourses** on how to promote and adopt sustainability messages using **inclusive language**; and
- Research the **challenges faced in practice** by environmental educators when working with the business and industry sector.

5.1.3. Priority actions for **business and industry**:

The following recommendations made in the National Review report were considered a priority for action by business and industry:

Informal network support

- Provide support in the form of training or other resources to **facilitators of informal networks** in order that they are able to maximise the learning opportunities for participants.

Mentoring for business managers

- Enlist professional learning for sustainability educators to **mentor managers** from corporate organisations responsible for developing corporate stakeholder education programs

Once again, participants agreed that mentoring was particularly important, but more so for the business and industry sector as opposed to government staff. Mentoring was considered to offer a powerful opportunity to build the capacity of those at senior management levels within organisations. As participants made clear, managers are bereft of time, not ideas. To date however, limited consideration

has been given to who it is that needs to be empowered specifically. Participants felt a need for a top-down approach given it is those at senior management level that largely drive the direction of business.

Educators also need to remain aware that many organisations are still resistant to external consultants. Language in particular was identified as a key area for improvement and one where the opportunity for misunderstanding is high. Participants saw the need for a ‘train the trainer’ approach to mentoring which could help in this area. The Australian Institute of Company Directors was identified by some as an organisation that could potentially adopt a mentoring role.

5.2 Next steps and stakeholder roles and responsibilities

Following the discussion surrounding needs in learning for sustainability and the various government, business and research recommendations made by the ARIES report, participants were given an opportunity to assess next steps and to identify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in taking these. This activity allowed participants to commit to promoting some of the recommendations and to assisting in implementing agreed actions. These are summarised in the tables below.

Table 1. Group One: Next steps and stakeholder roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Priority Recommendation	What action(s) can you or your organisation take to implement this recommendation?	What role(s) can you play to help implement this recommendation?	What support would you/your organisation need to take these actions?
Involvement of professional associations in needs assessment research to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify key internal senior influencers and relevant industry groups * Look at what programs these influencers and groups currently run/offer, if any. * Encourage company members to ask for profession-specific programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Help identify associations * Provide effective communication, research and assistance where necessary 	
Engage with supply chains – not mandating but encouraging change in SME’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Acknowledge responsibilities to build supply chain * Assist in developing smaller organisations * Untap initiatives for innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Promote the concept * Reward through supplier preference/purchasing of goods * Simplify process through simple objectives/transparent benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Assistance on how industry associates should engage with SME’s * Need an outlet for innovation

Table 2. Group Two: Next steps and stakeholder roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Priority Recommendation	What action(s) can you or your organisation take to implement this recommendation?	What role(s) can you play to help implement this recommendation?	What support would you/your organisation need to take these actions?
Involvement of professional associations in needs assessment research to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify key industry associations for each sector * Target these associations * Assess current level of understanding of issues * What's in it for the associations, members etc? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Technical expertise * Case studies * Educational resources and tools that can be tapped into when needed
Provide support, in the form of training or other resources, to facilitators of informal networks so that they are able to maximise the learning opportunities for participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Set up registers of experts and change agents who can volunteer time and resources * Specify resources to individual roles and embed within each organisation 		

Table 3. Group Three: Next steps and stakeholder roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Priority Recommendation	What action(s) can you or your organisation take to implement this recommendation?	What role(s) can you play to help implement this recommendation?	What support would you/your organisation need to take these actions?
Involvement of professional associations in needs assessment research to provide incentives which encourage responsibility/ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify appropriate professional organisations * Identify level of skills and awareness required * Work towards further advancing these skills and levels of awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Consult with other business stakeholders to identify the appropriate professional associations 	
Make sustainability skills part of core competencies in VET & higher education (embedded in reward and funding structure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Concerted efforts can be made between business and university/VET sector to put a strong business/education case forward for sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Help target specific groups - business/industry associations, university/VET networks, professional associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Government funding * Workshops with government (e.g. DEST) to present case and determine coherent education strategy

Table 4. Group Three: Next steps and stakeholder roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Priority Recommendation	What action(s) can you or your organisation take to implement this recommendation?	What role(s) can you play to help implement this recommendation?	What support would you/your organisation need to take these actions?
Encourage corporate organisations to engage in dialogue with stakeholders to determine their own learning <i>for</i> sustainability needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Create awareness among stakeholders through marketing at point of sale etc * Staff could ask their customers what their needs are and how sustainability could be improved/done better * Develop and run advertising campaigns 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The education and government sector could share successful case studies with business and industry
Research successful adaptation of sustainable practice in business and provide in depth case study examples to help promote sustainable practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide potential case study context/contacts. * Universities could provide research skills and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Advisory role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Funding * Time

5.3 Summary of Outcomes

The business and industry Stakeholder Forum not only helped to identify critical policy, practice and research priorities in business and industry Education for Sustainability but also produced a range of other positive outcomes which will all contribute to the advancement of EfS in this sector. The forum's outcomes included:

- A review the 'A National Review of Environmental Education and its Contribution in Australia: Business and Industry Education' research report recommendations to assess next steps and identify roles and responsibilities in taking these;
- An opportunity to input into the Australian Government's review of the National Action Plan in Environmental Education
- An informed dialogue amongst participants advancing the EfS debate in the business and industry sector;
- Increased understanding of the status, barriers and needs relating to EfS in the business and industry sector as shared among stakeholders;
- Encouraged a cross-sectoral network and potential partnerships to pursue EfS in the business and industry sector; and
- Developing a sense of shared ownership in the output of the Forum.

6.0 NEXT STAGE

This report will be used to provide input into the Australian Government's review of the National Action Plan in Environmental Education. The report will be forwarded to Urbis JHD for consideration. The engagement with stakeholders face to face assists ARIES to better understand research and training needs in this area. It will help ensure that future ARIES research is relevant, reflects the requirements of the business and industry sector and represents the concerns of sector stakeholders.

7.0 APPENDIX

7.1 Priority recommendations identified during group activity two

Group one

The priority recommendation were identified as:

Needs assessment

- Involve **professional associations in needs assessment research** to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists.

Supply chains

- Engage with supply chains encouraging – rather than mandating – change in SME's

Group two

The priority recommendations were identified as:

Needs assessment

- Involve **professional associations in needs assessment research** to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists

Informal network support

- Provide support (e.g training) to **facilitators of informal networks** to maximise learning opportunities for participants.

Group three

The priority recommendations were identified as:

Needs assessment

- Involve **professional associations in needs assessment research** to provide incentives which encourage responsibility and ownership of product issues in all parts of industry, not just amongst technical specialists

Sustainability skills

- Make sustainability skills part of core competencies in VET & higher education (embedded in reward and funding structure)

Group four

The priority recommendations were identified as:

Learning for Sustainability needs

- Encourage corporate organisations to engage in dialogue with stakeholders to determine their own learning *for* sustainability needs

Case studies of good practice

- Research successful adaptation of sustainable practice in business and provide in depth case study examples to help promote sustainable practice