

ENVIRONMENT

The AEU – ACT Branch recognises the overwhelming body of scientific evidence which shows that human activity, through the burning of fossil fuels, the continued use of ozone-depleting refrigerants, agricultural practices, deforestation and modern powered transport, has caused a significant increase in global temperatures that will negatively affect climate for decades to come. Indications are that this will lead to an increase in the gap between rich and poor, forced migration on a large scale and global conflict over access to resources. Australia is a disproportionate contributor to global warming. The Branch believes that successfully combating global warming is central to the sustainable economic and social development of Australian society and humanity as a whole. The Branch believes that working together to combat global warming represents an opportunity – to encourage investment, to create jobs and to ensure fairness and equity on a national and global scale.

The ACT Branch calls on governments to urgently minimise their reliance upon coal-based energy, to reject the option of nuclear power and to make a genuine and permanent commitment to the development and use of renewable energies such as solar, wind, wave and geo-thermal.

The ACT Branch recognises the importance of recycling programs in reducing the need for the creation of new materials and in reducing landfill.

The ACT Branch recognises the misuse of water resources by successive generations and recognises the profound value of water for human needs. It encourages the responsible and prudent use of water at all times. The Branch notes that Australians are the greatest consumers of water in the world on a per capita basis.

In view of these principles, the ACT Branch supports the efforts of schools and the CIT in aspiring to environmental sustainability through:

- the conducting of “green audits” on buildings and practices which identify areas for potential improvement in terms of environmental sustainability;
- the use of renewable energies, encompassing “Greenpower” consumption and the installation of solar panels and solar hot water systems;
- regularly reviewing efficiency levels of heating and cooling systems and appliances and exploring measures to improve a site’s ER (Energy Rating);
- assisting staff and students to change their habits where necessary with respect to turning off lights and appliances, and installing timers;
- assisting staff and students in using as little paper as possible when photocopying;
- purchasing in an environmentally responsible manner;
- instituting comprehensive programs of recycling for paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, printer cartridges, ICT hardware and office furniture;
- the installation of dual-flush toilets, low-flow showerheads, taps with timers, drip irrigation, grey water use and other water-saving initiatives and practices;
- waterless alternatives to human waste treatment, such as “enviro loos” and the biodegradable “Desert Cube” which obviates the need for the flushing of urinals and can potentially save millions of litres of water per year (see www.desert.com.au);
- a preference for drought-resistant plants in landscaping;
- the promotion of walking, cycling, car-pooling and the use of public transport to staff and students as alternatives to private motor vehicles, and in particular the promotion of environmentally friendly transport for cross-campus activities for CIT staff and students;
- the integration of approved curriculum resources and the creation of new courses and units based on environmental issues;
- the pursuing of institution-wide, student-centred research projects, developed in consultation with environmental organisations, on environmental themes;
- the provision of educational support for new and developing environmentally sustainable industries.

The ACT Branch believes that public education needs to be at the forefront of any plan to create an environmentally sustainable future. The Branch will support and promote curricula,

resources and teaching methods that enable learners at all levels to develop the values, skills and knowledge to live and work sustainably. The Branch will publicise through its journal examples of successful programs, in light of the above suggestions, that exist in ACT public schools and the CIT.

The ACT Branch recommends that all industry training packages include environmental and sustainability competencies.

The ACT Branch will lobby the ACT Government, DET and CIT to ensure that any new educational facilities are built according to acceptable Environmentally Sustainable Design standards.

The ACT Branch will seek representation on any of DET's and the CIT's environmental committees and will lobby for the representation of UnionsACT on any environmental committees for whole of government.

The ACT Branch aspires to environmental sustainability with regard to its own office premises and practices and will conduct an audit of the organisation's carbon footprint generated by Union activities including traveling by air and our vehicle fleet with a view to reducing our environmental impact and achieving the objective of becoming carbon neutral over time. This objective will be taken into account in the framing of future AEU budgets, including the purchase of Union vehicles, for which the prime considerations will be cost effectiveness, fuel efficiency and reduced environmental impact.