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SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY

Sustainability Covenant

Between Environment Protection Authority and Swinburne University of Technology

October 2005



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Background information

This voluntary SUSTAINABILITY COVENANT is an agreement between EPA Victoria and Swinburne University of Technology under section 49AA of the Environment Protection Act 1970 made on the day of 10 October 2005.

The National Centre for Sustainability at Swinburne has initiated the development of this Sustainability Covenant and has worked closely with the EPA to shape the initiatives outlined herewith.

This Sustainability Covenant will facilitate the move to a more sustainable Swinburne with support from EPA Victoria. The Covenant will commit Swinburne to working in a more environmentally sustainable way, encourage the dissemination of sustainable practices to students and staff through teaching, learning and research and promote sustainable practices to those with whom Swinburne engages externally.

The parties have agreed that this Sustainability Covenant will operate for a period of three years from the date of this agreement.

EPA Victoria is of the opinion that this sustainability covenant is likely to be effective in increasing the resource use efficiency and reducing the ecological impact of Swinburne and the tertiary education sector, and as such is a signatory to this agreement.

About the parties

Swinburne University of Technology

The 1992 proclamation by the Parliament of Victoria, of the Swinburne University of Technology Act, not only established a new university, but recognised Swinburne's distinguished history as a centre of technological research and learning.

Swinburne is a dual sector university with a strong reputation in Australia and overseas as a provider of career orientated education and as a university with a commitment to research. Swinburne maintains a strong technology base and important links with industry, complemented by a number of innovative specialist research centres which attract a great deal of international interest.

Swinburne is one of a few Australian universities whose responsibilities span the range of programs from apprenticeships to PhDs.

Swinburne is involved in a number of international initiatives and plays a significant part in the internationalisation of Australia's tertiary education system.

Swinburne's Vision

As stated in the Swinburne University of Technology *Statement of Direction 2015*, Swinburne's staff and students will be: Entrepreneurial in their work, International in their outlook and Intersectoral in their approach. Through these characteristics, Swinburne will become a university recognised as being: Flexible in Learning and Teaching, Focused in Research and Engaged with Industry and Community. This vision will be **underpinned by a commitment to a sustainable Swinburne.**

Sustainability Covenant

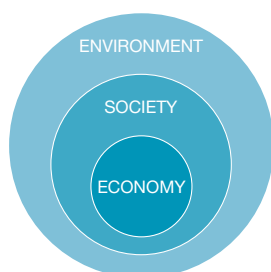
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Swinburne's approach to sustainability

Universities are responsible for preparing many of tomorrow's leaders and decision-makers and therefore play a major role in building a sustainable future. In order for universities to lead society to a sustainable future they must ensure sustainability is a mainstream activity, involving each and every aspect of the university.

While this Covenant focuses on the environmental dimensions of sustainability, Swinburne acknowledges sustainability as addressing environmental, social and financial factors; recognising that improvements in environmental sustainability contribute to improvements in economic and social performance. Swinburne understands that by integrating environmental, social and economic principles into all organisational decisions and activities, it is more likely to deliver the long-term vision represented by the *Statement of Direction 2015*.



Swinburne is currently involved in a number of key sustainability initiatives. For example, the *Centre for Regional Development* continues its commitment to sustainability through the Indicators of Community Sustainability/Community Well-being Project. Other research projects include 'Use of Spent Mushroom Substrate in Bioremediation' and 'contaminants in Post-Consumer Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET)' by the *Environment and Biotechnology Centre*.

In addition, the *National Centre for Sustainability (NCS)* is continually challenging the status quo in terms of best practice for sustainability. Examples of recent initiatives undertaken by NCS include developing Guideline Standards for Environmental Sustainability for the Vocational Education and Training Sector, and developing a Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool for Small to Medium Enterprises.

EPA Victoria

EPA Victoria has a charter to protect Victoria's environment. It works alongside the community to achieve its aims, involving and empowering individuals, communities and businesses and encouraging them to take shared responsibility and action. EPA Victoria's task as Victoria's environmental watchdog is to help establish environmental benchmarks, report on progress and alert the community when environmental quality is threatened.

EPA Victoria operates having regard to the principles of environmental protection identified in the Environment Protection Act 1970. These principles combine integrated sustainable economic growth objectives with social development and environmental stewardship. In particular, these principles reflect the integration of triple-bottom-line approaches into EPA Victoria's decision-making.

EPA Victoria's Vision

Together as an informed community we imagine, plan for and commit to achieving a healthier environment, knowing that through our work we can reach a sustainable future.

EPA Victoria's Mission

With all Victorians work to enable the achievement of a clean, safe and sustainable environment using our statutory capacities, knowledge, experience and continuing our valued relationships.

EPA Victoria's Values

The values that we at EPA Victoria hold are:

- passion for the environment
- sound science
- respect for people
- community focus
- integrity
- cooperation and openness
- creativity and learning

EPA Victoria is working with all sectors of society to help them embrace the opportunities and to overcome the challenges that sustainability presents. EPA Victoria believes dual sector institutions have a key role to play in helping society undertake the changes that sustainability requires.

This sustainability covenant enhances the abilities of EPA Victoria and Swinburne University of Technology to achieve sustainability outcomes in the Higher Education and TAFE sectors. EPA Victoria is committed to this sustainability covenant to assist Victoria's progress towards sustainability.

A Sustainability Covenant enables Swinburne University of Technology to drive and shape its own sustainability agenda in a public forum. It also enables EPA Victoria to provide statutory recognition to Swinburne's environmental and sustainability leadership.

Objectives and strategies

The broad objective of this Sustainability Covenant is to **educate for sustainability**. This means that by implementing this Covenant, Swinburne will empower its staff and students to contribute to a more sustainable future. Rather than simply teach 'about' sustainability or conduct research 'about' sustainability, this Covenant will be a vehicle for action and life long learning.

Educating *for* sustainability at Swinburne includes the following broad areas which, for consistency are directly related to Swinburne's *Statement of Direction 2015*.

- Learning and Teaching *for* Sustainability
- Researching *for* Sustainability
- Engaging with Industry and Community *for* Sustainability
- Developing a Workplace *for* Sustainability

The following strategies are considered pivotal to the success of the Covenant:

- Encourage involvement of all stakeholders
- Communicate outcomes to stakeholders
- Develop a teamwork approach where practicable
- Consider stakeholder values, attitudes and level of understanding
- Work at a realistic scale: adopt pilot projects where possible and promote as exemplary models to encourage others, both internally and externally
- Regularly review progress of sustainability initiatives

The diagram to the left illustrates the key relationships at Swinburne for developing, implementing and reviewing the initiatives outlined in this Covenant.



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Commitments of the parties

In working together EPA Victoria and Swinburne University of Technology commit to the following range of initiatives over the next three years:

1 Learning and teaching for sustainability

Swinburne will incorporate the interconnections between the environment, society and the economy into learning and teaching programs

Initiative 1.1

Promote and develop strategies for incorporating sustainability into learning and teaching programs

- Provide ongoing professional development in sustainability to facilitate the incorporation of sustainability into teaching and learning programs
- Establish incentive programs for staff and students involved in sustainability initiatives
 - Develop a National/State level student award scheme
 - Extend the Teaching Excellence Awards to cover education for sustainability
- Conduct introductory presentations to staff to promote the importance of teaching and learning for sustainability. For example:
 - Staff development and discipline meetings
 - Strategic planning sessions
- Establish pilot projects for both Higher Education Divisions and the TAFE Division for incorporating sustainability into course material and training packages.
 - Use the pilot projects as models to encourage all disciplines to include sustainability in their learning and teaching programs

- Work towards including sustainability electives in all training packages and courses
- Provide input and ongoing support to the Curriculum Framework Project in Higher Education (Hawthorn/Prahran) to incorporate sustainability
- Contribute to curriculum renewal at Higher Education (Lilydale)
- Explore opportunities to develop new sustainability-based courses; locally and internationally
- Encourage the 'greening' of apprenticeship and traineeship programs. For example:
 - Incorporating first rate training in building and electrical programs
 - Focusing on sustainability in horticulture programs
 - Promoting life-cycle thinking

Initiative 1.2

Establish Swinburne's Careers and Employment Unit as a leader in the provision of careers incorporating sustainability

- Promote awareness of and access to careers in sustainability through various modes including, but not limited to:
 - Online employment services such as SwinTrak and GEL
 - Student Competitions (Employability Skills Challenge, SIFE)
- Expand workplace opportunities for graduates and students with an interest in sustainability through:
 - Developing partnerships with environmental jobs networks and other recruitment agencies

2 Research for sustainability

Swinburne will seek to embrace sustainability as a fundamental component in core research activities where practicable

Initiative 2.1

Strengthen existing research programs through sustainability principles

- Encourage academic staff and students to undertake and publish research for sustainability
- Develop sustainability guidelines for research projects
- Investigate opportunities to include further sustainability research into each research area of Swinburne. For example,
 - Water sensitive urban design in Civil Engineering

Initiative 2.2

Seek new research opportunities that will assist Swinburne in becoming a more research intensive university

- Investigate opportunities for Swinburne to develop new areas of research in sustainability-related areas where a leadership position can be developed within a five-year period
 - Local and international research opportunities in sustainability
 - Seek opportunities for sustainability-based final year student projects
- Develop partnerships with industry, government and non-government organisations that can enhance Swinburne's position as a leader in sustainability-based research

- Research and source opportunities to upgrade and modify sustainability tools. For example:
 - Life Cycle Approaches
 - The SME Sustainability Tool
 - Community/Social indicators
 - Community-based social marketing
- Source additional funding opportunities for research for sustainability

Initiative 2.3

Undertake internal research to identify levels of awareness of sustainability amongst staff and students

- Survey Swinburne's staff and students to determine the attitudes and level of awareness and understanding of sustainability
 - Conduct repeat surveys over time to establish behavioural changes
- Review and document the performance of the Sustainability Covenant initiatives
 - Develop a Swinburne Sustainability Scorecard for monitoring performance and establishing benchmarks

Initiative 2.4

Promote research which addresses sustainability outcomes

- Recognise and acknowledge research which addresses sustainability through Research Excellence Awards
- Promote technologies developed by Swinburne that enhance environmental sustainability in an effort to boost Swinburne's reputation and advance sustainability
- Seek opportunities to publish sustainability-based articles in relevant refereed journals and other publications

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3 Engaging with industry and community for sustainability

Swinburne will demonstrate leadership in sustainability through mutually beneficial links with industry and community

Initiative 3.1

Enhance Swinburne's capacity to develop partnerships with industry and community that deliver sustainable outcomes

- Encourage and support Swinburne's key industry and community liaison departments
- Raise the profile of the National Centre for Sustainability as a department that can provide fee for service education and training opportunities, research for sustainability, and consulting services
- Keep informed of local, regional and global developments and trends in sustainability by subscribing to or becoming members of relevant networks, working groups and other charters. For example:
 - Sustainable Campus Group
 - Talloires Declaration

Initiative 3.2

Identify and develop partnerships with industry and community to deliver sustainability outcomes

- Identify additional training, research and consulting services that Swinburne can provide to industry and community
- Develop strategies to increase sustainability-based Industry Based Learning (IBL), work placement experiences and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities for students
- Form strategic alliances with other universities to strengthen Swinburne's position in contract negotiations. For example, negotiating prices in purchasing and energy and waste management contracts
- Participate in local community activities and events to ensure that Swinburne's 'sustainability message' is coherent, consistent and compatible with community goals
- Establish and enhance linkages between Swinburne and Indigenous communities

Initiative 3.3

Work with external partners to achieve and promote greater sustainability outcomes

- Develop and deliver additional sustainability services for clients
- Present at relevant industry conferences and seminars to raise the profile of sustainability and promote Swinburne's initiatives
- Increase awareness within government, industry and the broader community of the leadership that Swinburne demonstrates in the area of sustainability, through the EPA website, publications and appropriate business functions. For example:
 - Promote achievements made through successful partnerships
 - Promote sustainability tools such as the SME Sustainability Tool

4 A workplace for sustainability

Swinburne will implement a range of university-wide measures to establish a workplace and student culture of sustainability

Initiative 4.1

Develop an environmental management framework for the University to guide sustainable practices across all operations

- Incorporate sustainability elements into the University Planning Framework, including but not limited to:
 - Policies and Procedures
 - University Plans including Divisional and Group, Faculty, School and Individual Plans
- Develop an environmental policy for the University
- Develop management plans/guidelines for energy, waste, water, purchasing, buildings and grounds and transport
- Incorporate minimum sustainability criteria into supplier and business contracts
- Prepare a Sustainability Report within the next three years
 - Develop improved measurement systems and key performance indicators as a first priority

Initiative 4.2

Reduce the impact of Swinburne's physical resources, including the assets themselves and the way we manage them

- Establish benchmarks for using and managing our physical resources
 - Collect baseline data on energy and water consumption, waste management, purchasing, transport and other elements of our physical resources
 - Ensure Swinburne exceeds tertiary education sector benchmarks
- Develop or subscribe to programs aimed at reducing the impact of our physical resources
 - Green Office Program to improve the environmental performance of our office environments
 - Sustainable Landscapes Program to improve the sustainability of the natural environments at each campus and effectively make the University's natural environments a 'classroom for sustainability'

- Waste Wise Program
- Space Management Program to optimise the utilisation of facilities

- Adopt sustainable technologies where practicable

Initiative 4.3

Enable Swinburne's staff and students to become more active in working towards sustainability

- Build sustainability concepts and information into all staff inductions and student open days
 - Provide information about sustainable living and working
- Identify sustainability training needs for staff and determine appropriate actions
- Provide advice and encouragement to staff and student-led sustainability initiatives. For example:
 - Venture Cup projects
 - Environment Week
 - Ride to Work Day
- Establish working groups for each of the four broad areas of this covenant
- Support and promote a student environment group

Initiative 4.4

Promote Swinburne's achievements in sustainability internally

- Develop a sustainability ideas register through existing information management systems, such as the Ideas Gateway
- Establish a Sustainable Swinburne Intranet, which will include:
 - Information exchange capabilities
 - Sustainability publications, events and activities
- Promote our achievements through internal publications and events including, but not limited to:
 - Student publications (Swine, Tabula Rasa)
 - Staff publications (Staff Bulletin, Research Bulletin)
 - Events (Swinburne Innovation Festival, Orientation Week)
 - Swinburne's Intranet
 - Swinburne News

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Management of the Covenant

A steering committee comprising representatives of each party to this Covenant will be responsible for managing the overarching performance of the parties under this agreement.

The steering committee is responsible for:

- endorsing and directing implementation action
- reviewing implementation progress
- ensuring appropriate resourcing
- reporting and making recommendations on the progress of the covenant to both the Swinburne Executive Group and the EPA Chairman

During the life of the Covenant the parties commit to a formal half yearly progress review and year-end report on each anniversary of the Covenant, which will be published to the websites of the parties.

This Covenant is entirely voluntary and, despite any commitment given in this Covenant, any party can withdraw at any time upon giving notice to the other parties, without giving rise to an action or claim for damages, reimbursement of expenses or compensation whatsoever. In the event that a party proposes to withdraw from the Covenant, all parties agree to instigate discussions about why this might have to occur.

In accordance with section 49AC(c) of the Environment Protection Act 1970, the parties authorise the copying of all or any part of the Covenant by any person. The parties also authorise the use of any copies made by the person.

Further information

If you would like further information about the Sustainability Covenant between Environment Protection Authority and Swinburne University of Technology, contact:

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The material in this brochure was correct at the time of printing, (September 2005) but is subject to alteration or amendment without notice by Swinburne.

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Australia's No. 1 University for Generic Skills*
Ranked No. 2 for overall Student Satisfaction*
Fourth out of 37 Universities for Good Teaching*

**Source: Department of Education Science and Training (DEST), Nov 2004.*