

Climate change professionals

- Environmental scientists, land managers and others, monitoring and reporting on climate change. By default of the existence of this inquiry, positive conclusions can be drawn on the success and capacity of education institutions and not for profit organisations in providing information and education within this capacity.

These individuals predominately have a solid understanding of climate change and many are able to adapt their knowledge and skills to an organisational environment where climate change professionals are;

- Individuals responsible for;
 - a) ensuring organisations adhere to environmental legislation, and
 - b) minimise the ecological footprint of the organisation.
 - c) Using sustainability principles to discover and implement economic and efficiency benefits.

Contextually the current industry professionals whose scope includes Climate Change are usually undertaking this as a component of a role that also includes other responsibilities, eg: Environmental, Health & Safety Managers. An exception is large enterprises that make profit from the extraction and supply of natural resources, eg: Environmental Officers and or Environmental Consultants. Small to medium enterprises engaging with Climate Change, generally do not have an individual specifically responsible for this and utilise the line or general managers in a manner similar to how they manage OH&S. When required, preferably with easy to access resources and in a manner that will ideally benefit the organisation.

Education Scan

During February 2007 I conducted a web based scan with some follow up phone conversations of universities, registered training organisations and the NTIS website for courses or units relating to sustainability practitioners. Today the field has increased with Swinburne TAFE & University taking the initiative, yet there are still limited options and most are located within the context of other programs. Unlike OH&S, Career Practitioners, Change Management and other specialist roles, there are minimal currently existing stand alone course options within the education institutions for Sustainability or Climate Change professionals operating within everyday business.

The knowledge exists and the education institutions are moving towards a greater offering based on industry demand. Units of Competency have been developed, courses include subjects relating to and dealing directly with sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Analysing the existing units of competency and holding discussions with a few university heads of school(s) indicate that it is not a large leap to suggest that educational institutions could readily develop and deliver relevant courses.

The area of potential concern with a rapid increase of organisations requiring climate change professionals would not be the development of courses. Accessing a sufficient quantity of trainers and educators with knowledge of environmental law, acts, and regulations, also having experience implementing policies and procedures relating to ecological sustainability and corporate social responsibility within business will pose an initial dilemma.

Developing Courses

Courses listed on ntis.gov.au	
Course Home Sustainability Assessment	21854VIC
Certificate IV Understanding and Negotiating Sustainability Issues	51817
Diploma Sustainability	21645VIC
Graduate Certificate Sustainability	21545VIC
<p>Units of Competency listed on ntis.gov.au</p> <p>AQF levels stated relate to listings within relevant course outlines. Some of the listed units require some modification to enable it be relevant across a broader range of industries.</p>	
Participate in environmentally sustainable work practices	AQF 1, 2 & 3
Maintain and monitor environmental work practices	AQF 3
Implement and monitor environmentally sustainable work practices	AQF 3 & 4
Develop Strategies to address Sustainability issues	AQF 4, 5 & 6
Develop workplace policy and procedures for sustainability	AQF 5
Develop climatic risk management strategies	AQF 5
Manage environmental management systems	AQF 6
Create innovation and change through extension	AQF 6

Recommendations on Course Inclusions

Due to the nature of the role and the fast paced, constant change within this environment at this point in time, there are a number of areas that require attention. To prepare individuals to undertake a role as a sustainability practitioner they will require knowledge of;

- Climate Change
- Sustainability within the context of their operating environment
- Relevant legislation and acts
- Policies and Procedures
- Analysing and Planning
- Change

Within VET and Tertiary education environments the complimentary subject or unit of competency choices already exist and it is a matter of packaging, promoting and implementing the courses. Course offerings particular to sustainability professionals should be developed within vocational education, degree and post graduate programs.

Future Viability

Courses do not remain viable for course providers if there are not environments for graduates to apply their knowledge. To ensure employment outcomes for graduates businesses require a need to engage sustainability professionals. A personal experience of locating a Masters of Business that could include sustainability as a part of the program limited the options drastically.

Government and industry imposed requirements have a significant impact on the operation of all businesses and what professional knowledge is accessed. Considering the role of OH&S professionals and the level of course offerings particular to their function 10 years ago, could provide useful insights into the future of Sustainability professionals within industry.

Professionals	Useful when	Needed for
Human Resources	Employing staff	Understanding and implementing relevant legal requirements
Accounting	Considering business viability, expenses, etc	Understanding and implementing relevant legal requirements
OH&S	Considering health and safety	Understanding and implementing relevant legal requirements
Education & Training	Educating current or future employees.	Mostly including legally enforceable minimum standards.
Sustainability	Considering how sustainable practices can benefit business	Some large organisations when meeting some legal requirements

I am available for further comment, or to assist with further information on course development.

Regards

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