



Students' Representative Council University of Sydney

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Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

5 September 2008

Dear Committee Secretary,

The Students' Representative Council (SRC) at The University of Sydney is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the **Inquiry into the Effects of Climate Change on Training and Employment Needs**.

The SRC is the representative body of undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. Students at the University of Sydney recognise climate change as one of the biggest environmental, social and economic threats facing the current and future generations.

Students have been working hard to make a difference on campus and in August 2005 the SRC Environment Collective launched the Green Campus Now Campaign. This is a clean energy campaign, asking the University to commit to energy reduction and to switch from 100% coal energy to a minimum 12.5% (since increased to 20%) Green Power energy.

A student referendum was held on the question of the University's energy use and source. Just under 3000 students voted and the results were overwhelming.

90% the University has a responsibility to act on Climate Change

93% the University should commit to real energy reduction targets

90% the University should immediately begin purchasing at least 20% Green Power

81% the University should declare its partnerships with fossil fuel and nuclear industries.

Students have collected over 6 000 student and staff signatures.

The Green Campus Now Campaign is endorsed not only by the SRC, but also the University of Sydney Union, 16 of 17 faculties; the Gridiron Team, Dr. Barrie Pittock, the National Tertiary Education Union, among others. The Student Referendum generated significant local and national media attention (*Triple J's* national news bulletin, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian Higher Education* supplement).

While small steps have been made, this campaign is ongoing, with the campaign team growing in size, diversity, strength and power. Students at the University of Sydney are not alone in their campaigning for environmental responsibility across campuses. Similar campaigns are happening at different campuses, not only in Australia but across the planet.

Students and young people are uniquely aware, connected and passionate about environmental issues, as this is our future. Students continue to make links between what's happening on campus and broader climate issues and students will be proud to be on a campus that can identify



the challenges posed by climate change and fully equip them and others to work with these challenges in the future.

It is clear that climate change will have a profound impact on the type of work that will be required in the 21st century. Climate change is no longer a subject only for political debate and scientific labs. Climate change is a fact of life and will be a fact of University and working life for current students and generations after us.

Climate change will affect all industries and all work, all decisions about resources, spending and politics. Climate change professionals are not simply scientists but are people working across all disciplines and all industries.

There is no University in Australia that is properly equipped to meet the current or future demand for climate change professionals. It is not properly understood at department levels, nor at top administrative levels, how central and important the issues of climate change will be. In order to become fully equipped there needs to be a change in culture and priorities at both a Government level and a University level.

If there is not a Government focus on climate change as one of the most major concerns facing as a sustainable community then it will be difficult for research and training institutions to meet current and future demand for climate change professionals.

Recommendation 1

Government should consider climate change guidelines for industry. This may be seen as having similarities to legislation that is now firmly established around issues of work place occupational health and safety as well as concepts of social and environment responsibility models.

Recommendation 2

There should be explicit funding provided for University research and teaching across all disciplines in issue of climate change.

Recommendation 3

Universities must be encouraged to embrace climate change curricula and research and teaching in all disciplines must be closely linked so that new climate-change related discipline knowledge can be transferred effectively and immediately.

Recommendation 4

There should be adequate Government funding for Universities so that they are not forced into corporate / government funding deals with governments, companies and multinationals that are well known polluters.

Recommendation 5

There should be adequate Government funding and support for the University sector so that Universities (and other trainers) are not forced into corporate / government funding deals that may strip intellectual property from University staff and students.



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Recommendation 6

Government and industry together should work with Universities to enable all students, across all disciplines, to be able to do work experience / placements with an environmental focus / context. (eg. more rural placements)

Recommendation 7

Universities should be further encouraged by funding to build both staff and student relationships with local environmental partners and community groups. This will add to the dynamic nature of the challenges posed by climate change as well as foster greater cooperation and skill sharing.

Recommendation 8

Encourage development of overseas placements, including student scholarships and staff sabbaticals, that are directly linked to climate change curricula and skill development. These should enable exchange both to and from Australia and countries in the region. This is the region we live in. Regional challenges are Australia's challenges.

Yours sincerely

Kate Laing