

Sustainability: What does it mean?



Talking about sustainability

The answer to the question above depends upon who you are, where you live, what you do, your local socio-ecological problems and your knowledge frameworks. Therefore it is very important that you talk to your colleagues, friends and associates about sustainability issues and solutions. This is because the process is an important part of planning sustainable futures, according to the **Transition to Sustainability: ECU South West** project.



What can the project contribute?

The project began with an intention to create a community of practice among the Bunbury Campus staff, to support the incorporation of sustainability across curriculum, teaching and learning. This called for interdisciplinary and inter-program discussions on sustainability – however each discipline has their own generic understandings of the term. So we began by leaving the definition open, anticipating that this would be one of the project outcomes. In fact, it seems to be the process that is more important than the outcome – in other words, the conversations and meetings are essential in creating a community of practice in which we might consider sustainability applications.



Progress – sustainability meanings

We are now in the process of assembling a table of meanings. As an example, in relation to the biophysical dimension of sustainability, Business staff see that it is important to minimise impact for business continuity, Nursing staff see it as an important element in preventative health, Social Work staff see it as significant from a human rights perspective and Surf Science see coastal care as central to their interest. Sustainability also includes economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions.