

## What is the Environment?

The Macquarie Concise Dictionary defines the environment as:

1. The aggregate of surrounding things, conditions, or influences.
2. The biological conditions in which an organism lives, especially a balanced system.
3. The totality of the surrounding conditions, physical and social, of a particular area.
4. A situation involving a specified factor or factors.

Essentially the environment is an integral part of our existence as human beings and as a society. It is not something which is 'out there' and only the province of greenies. The maintenance of a good quality environment, whether it be the elements of the natural environments, is essential to our long term survival and well being.

In order to operate effectively, scientists, engineers, architects, metallurgists and indeed all professionals working either in their specific discipline, or in management, need to be aware of environmental issues, the potential environmental ramifications of their actions and the need for environmental management. Most decisions can have environmental effects. Making appropriate decisions which take into account environmental issues is a part of everyone's work, not just that of designated environmental managers.

Environment includes:

ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities;  
and

all natural and physical resources; and

the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas, however large or small, that contribute to their biological diversity and integrity, intrinsic or attributed scientific value or interest, amenity, harmony and sense of community; and

the social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions that affect, or are affected by, things mentioned previously.