



In support of Clean Up Australia's Business Clean Up Day, the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) has suggested some changes you can make to improve your business' performance and avoid generating waste or polluting your office environment in the future. These initiatives can deliver considerable green benefits, most notably reduced costs, water and energy savings and healthier workplaces.

Our ideas are listed below. Many can be undertaken immediately (so start TODAY), whilst others may require a longer lead-time and/or a few of you planning the changes.

## **TODAY (& EVERY DAY)**

### Equipment

- Turn off all computers, monitors and other office machines when not in use (especially overnight and on weekends).
- Activate the energy-saving function 'Energy Star' that is installed on most new computers. A step-by-step guide is provided at <http://www.energystar.gov.au/consumers/stepbystep.html>. If your computer doesn't have energy-saving software installed you can save energy by simply switching off the monitor when not in use. Monitors can consume three times the energy used by your PC.
- Re-set photocopiers and printers to default to double-sided printing.
- Always choose the low water consumption feature on dishwashers (ie. the short-wash option often called "Economy"). Display a sign to this effect for all users, including cleaners.

### Lighting

- Remove superfluous light bulbs – that's right, just take them out!
- Turn off lights when not in use (especially overnight and on weekends) and put up signs to remind other people to do so.

### Your Comfort

- Open windows - if you can - instead of using air conditioners. Remember that most air conditioning systems provide less than 10% fresh air (no wonder you often feel sleepy!).
- Ask your service manager to program your climate control systems to turn off at the end of each day and on weekends – there's no point heating and cooling empty offices.
- Don't block up the vents above your desk to avoid draughts as this will only cause increased air movement for other colleagues.
- Position your computer monitor so it is perpendicular to the window to reduce glare.
- Adjust the monitor brightness to match the space brightness surrounding your desk – this may change throughout the day.
- Organise an energy audit for your office. The Australian Building Greenhouse Rating scheme (<http://www.abgr.com.au/>) provides accredited assessments of the greenhouse intensity of office buildings. A list of assessors can be found at <http://www.abgr.com.au>

### Materials

- Install a desk-side recycling bin for all paper products – you can either re-use a cardboard box or ask your waste paper collection contractor to provide one. Most waste collection companies can provide these for you.
- Use electronic mail wherever possible. You can also send and receive faxes electronically (ask the IT department to establish this capability for everyone).
- Use on-line (versus hard copy) versions of items such as annual reports, information memorandums etc. Cut and paste necessary information and/or print needed pages only (rather than whole reports).

- Avoid using cover sheets when sending facsimiles and 'With Compliments' slips when sending physical mail.
- Use two-sided printing for all letters, reports etc.
- Print two (or even four) pages per single A4 sheet of paper where possible. It's easy - just nominate it via your print dialogue box (often using the 'Properties' button). Trust us, it's still readable!
- Re-use envelopes, bags etc. Make a space in your stationery store area for people to recycle them.
- Re-use computer disks and CDs.
- Share periodicals with other staff to minimise multiple copies.
- Re-use paper that is unprinted on one side for in-house drafts, fax machines, photocopies etc.
- Re-fill toner cartridges used in photocopiers and ink-jet printers.
- As well as sharing newspapers and periodicals, review ordering and distribution requirements – are they actually being read, and is the person they are addressed to still on staff?

#### Other

- Establish a 'Green Office' team or committee to implement longer-term and ongoing energy efficiency initiatives.
- Walk, cycle or use public transport.
- Take your mug when purchasing takeaway coffees – you might even get a discount!
- Create a flexible work environment by giving staff that need after-hours computer access remote log-in capability so they can work from home.
- E-mail this checklist to staff, clients, family and friends.
- E-mail other green initiatives to the GBCA ([info@gbcaus.org](mailto:info@gbcaus.org)) for inclusion in next year's BCUD checklist.

### **NEXT WEEK**

#### Equipment

- Implement office policy to minimise unnecessary equipment use. Introduce an incentive scheme to encourage staff. Ensure that your organisation's purchasing policy sources the most efficient equipment and requires suppliers to provide proof of performance. See <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/energyefficiency/appliances/labelling/index.html>.
- Provide an efficient under-sink filter/chill water system to discourage staff from buying plastic water bottles (or at least encourage them to re-fill them).
- That sweet smell you detect in the print room is toxic ozone gas and sometimes a cocktail of other nasties. Get your print rooms ventilated separately to your regular air conditioning.
- Consider flat screen monitors as they use 1/3 of the energy. Laptop computers use even less!

#### Lighting

- Replace light bulbs with lower wattage or compact fluorescents.
- Place signs in areas where lighting is needed infrequently reminding staff to turn off lights when leaving the room or building.
- Install 'task' lighting – eg an efficient lamp for your desk so that a whole bay of overhead lights doesn't have to be turned on just for you.

#### Your Comfort

- Position electrical equipment (eg printers, faxes) away from thermostats to avoid false temperature readings and consequent over-cooling.
- If you use a laptop get a stand to elevate the screen to eye level to avoid glare and eye-strain
- Get your IT department to configure your operating system to deliver pop-up messages on staff computer screens reminding staff to take a break, get up and stretch, recycle etc

#### Water Conservation

- Shut off hot water to bathrooms – using only cold water saves both energy and water. Just think of the distance hot water has to travel to get to an office bathroom, which is why you often have to wait so long for it to warm up!
- Reduce hot water temperatures in kitchens to reduce heating costs and also avoid accidental scalding.
- Only run dishwashers with full loads, and use 'economy' settings, which use less water and energy and are perfectly adequate for washing cups and glasses.

## Materials

- Replace disposable items such as plastic and polystyrene cups, wooden stirrers and paper towels with glasses, mugs, cutlery and cloth. Buy enough mugs for staff and visitors and don't let people keep them as their own – so much water is wasted if everyone washes their own mug each day – use the dishwasher!
- Buy only re-writable CDs and re-useable disks.
- Make sure you buy recycled content paper. Check out the University of Melbourne's Little Green Guide to Design & Printing: <http://www.mpso.unimelb.edu.au/mpso/publications/green>
- Introduce re-usable envelopes for internal mail.
- Revise distribution lists for annual reports, newsletters etc. Delete redundant and repeat addresses. Establish a regular review program to maintain correct and complete databases.
- If your organisation is a shareholder in an Australian listed company, check <http://www.etree.com.au> (or contact the listed company direct) to see if you can register your organisation's e-mail address to receive all shareholder communications electronically. A donation is made to Landcare Australia for every eTree registration.
- Remove your name from unwanted mailing distribution lists.
- Turn boxes of unused or obsolete stationery and single-sided printed paper into note pads.
- Place stickers on photocopiers to alert staff to the double-sided printing option button.
- Set all office printers to default to double-sided printing; staff can override this option if single-sided printing is required.
- Designate a paper tray on all photocopiers and printers for re-using single-sided printed paper.
- Provide waste sorting bins to enable staff to separate and recycle waste such as paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, aluminium, toner cartridges, mobile phones batteries etc.

## Other

- Use indoor plants to filter pollutants from indoor air, release oxygen, increase the relative humidity (in air-conditioned offices) and create a more natural, pleasant and healthy working environment.
  - Sign up to a water management and conservation program – eg Sydney Water's Every Drop Counts Business Program for business customers who spend more than \$70,000 per year on water and related charges (see <http://www.sydneywater.com.au/SavingWater/InYourBusiness/HowCanWeHelp.cfm>) or in Victoria enter the Savewater! Awards: <http://www.savewater.com.au/default.asp?SectionId=18&SortTag=15>
  - Sustainability Victoria's recently revamped website holds the key to a wealth of resources including Waste Wise office, hotel, events, and catering toolkits <http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au>
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## **NEXT MONTH/YEAR**

### Equipment

- Consider buying or leasing flat screen monitors – they are very energy efficient.
- Install water-saving devices or flow restrictors in kitchens and bathrooms. Ensure AAA-rated showerheads are fitted in any shower cubicles and consider using a timer to minimise the length of showers taken.
- Install surge detectors to avoid accidental damage to your equipment.

### Lighting

- Older style electromagnetic ballasts cause perceptible light flicker that can cause headaches and nausea. The vibration also causes an audible hum. Replace electromagnetic ballasts with electronic ballasts which are not only more energy efficient but operate at a higher frequency and produce virtually no detectable flicker or noise.
- Install intelligent lighting controls including motion detectors, separate zone switching and after-hours timers and photo sensors to automatically turn off bays of lights when natural light is ample.
- Design your office layout to maximise use of natural light - artificial lighting typically accounts for at least 15% of the total energy consumption of an average office building so it's worth trying to reduce this reliance.

### Your Comfort

- Have your heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems regularly serviced to ensure they operate at maximum efficiency. Most air conditioning simultaneously runs heating and cooling processes to try to maintain the often prescribed 22 degrees Celsius.
- Remember that horizontal blinds and shading devices are more effective for north facing windows, and vertical blinds are more effective for east and west facing windows.

### Materials

- Buy non-toxic cleaning supplies in bulk or condensed forms, and in recycled or recyclable containers.
- Buy chlorine-free, high-recycled content paper and tissue products. Choose similarly environmentally-friendly paper products for company business cards, Christmas cards etc. Better still, don't send Christmas cards at all!
- Buy re-manufactured or refillable toner cartridges for printers and photocopiers.
- Establish a 're-distribution room' to enable staff to deposit and re-use surplus office materials including computers, telephones, mouse-pads, pens, pencils, rulers, staplers and even furniture before buying new products. Donate stockpiled items to schools or charities.

### Other

- Hold conferences, workshops and other special events in the office or nearby and/or use video-conferencing.
- Introduce and promote a ride-sharing scheme.
- Choose Green Power from your electricity supplier to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. See <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au> for more information.
- The following websites will provide you with more ideas and information:
  - A Guide to Purchasing Recycled Content Office Paper from Resource NSW  
<http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/officebuildings>
  - Waste Reduction in Office Buildings – A Guide for Tenants <http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/officebuildings>
  - Waste Reduction in Office Buildings – A Guide for Building Managers  
<http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/officebuildings>
- Better Practice Guide for Waste Management in Multi-unit Dwellings  
<http://www.resource.nsw.gov.au/data/MultiUnit%20Dwellings.pdf>