

## VECCI's business sustainability products and services for small businesses

### Compass

Carbon Compass, an exciting initiative from Carbon Down, is a web based community of businesses and organisations sharing their sustainability and carbon reducing knowledge, experience and practical solutions.

Visit [www.carboncompass.com.au](http://www.carboncompass.com.au) or call 03 8662 5490 to register your business.

### Grow Me The Money

A 12-step program, Grow Me The Money will take your business through strategies to reduce your carbon footprint, save money and report credibly on your savings to customers, staff and the community. Grow Me The Money participants save on average \$7019, across all three utilities, and deliver over 60 tonnes of carbon abatement (from a sample of 288 business participants).

Join Grow Me The Money today at [www.growmethemoney.com.au](http://www.growmethemoney.com.au) or by calling 03 8662 5333. Prices start from \$99 and are tax deductible.

### Sustainability Consulting

Experienced VECCI Sustainability Consultants can show you how to achieve great outcomes for your business, your community and the environment, with expertise in:

- Sustainability strategy and policy development
- Environmental opportunity assessment
- Action planning and implementation
- Carbon footprint assessment.

VECCI consultants come to you, saving valuable time, and their assistance is tailored to your unique circumstances. Visit [www.vecci.org.au/sustainability](http://www.vecci.org.au/sustainability) or call 03 8662 5480. Discounts apply for VECCI members.

### Sustainability Training

Want to know more and learn from other businesses? In a new era of 'green choices', VECCI's dedicated training and briefings can help your business reduce its environmental footprint, save money, and give you a competitive advantage. Delivered throughout Victoria, prices start from just \$49.50.

The following programs are currently available:

*Carbon Management 101: cutting through the carbon jargon.* Who should attend? All small business representatives interested in climate change, carbon management practices as well as identifying opportunities for making environmental and financial savings.

*Sustainability in Action workshop: hands on sustainability practices for SMEs.* Who should attend? Small business representatives interested in tools and techniques that assist to track their resource use and realise financial savings.

*Creative Thinking and Sustainability workshop: Your sustainable edge in changing times.* This half-day workshop is packed with practical tips and hands on examples demonstrating the four cornerstones of creative thinking and uniting these with opportunities for sustainable business practice. Who should attend? All business representatives interested in smarter decision-making and sustainable business practices.

*Green Office Briefing: simple steps to green your office.* This two hour briefing is for SME's and larger businesses who wish to educate their staff regarding electricity consumption, paper use, waste disposal and purchasing practices in the office. This interactive briefing empowers staff to take immediate action in implementing green office practices.

To book, visit [www.vecci.org.au/training](http://www.vecci.org.au/training) or call VECCI on 03 8662 5333.



VICTORIAN EMPLOYERS' CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

IR ADVICE

TRAINING

NETWORKING EVENTS

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION



## small business and climate change what affects you and what you can do



## Business and professional services

### Drivers of change for small to medium professional service providers

- Changes in the energy market are putting pressure on energy prices, and will also increase the costs of inputs that are energy-intensive to produce.
- For the business and professional services sector, key price increases will be for:
  - Energy and water
  - Paper and cardboard
  - Cleaning products
  - Fertilisers and basic chemicals.

### What you can do in your small business

- Review your exposure to increased prices and adjustment costs, and that of your competitors
- Reduce costs by reducing your energy and water use and waste generation by:
  - Improving energy efficiency of lighting and heating and air conditioning systems
  - Recycling or composting your waste.
- Explore new business opportunities, including:
  - Providing advice on energy and water efficient products and services
  - Providing information about the greenhouse gas emissions or environmental impact of your services or products.

### Fact sheets in this series

#### General climate change information:

- Drivers of change affecting small business
- Weathering climate change impacts
- Changing climates for large and small consumer markets.

#### Sector-specific climate change information:

- Accommodation
- Business and professional services
- Cafés and restaurants
- Manufacturing
- Retail and wholesale trade
- Tourism
- Transport.



### A changing business environment

A significant proportion of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) operate in this diverse sector, including:

- Finance and accounting, business advisory, administrative support and consulting services
- Building cleaning, pest control and gardening services
- Property and real estate services.

SMEs in the business and professional services sector will be impacted by rising energy prices from changes to the energy market, climate change policies and changing consumer preferences. The physical effects of climate change will also have some flow-on effects, particularly through increasing water prices.

### Adjusting to climate change policies and energy and water prices

#### Energy price increases

The renewable energy target is driving changes in how we produce electricity and will, along with network investment to ensure supply reliability, put pressure on retail electricity prices.

Increased energy prices will have a direct impact your energy bill and indirect impacts through increases in the costs of energy-intensive inputs. For the business and professional services sector, these inputs are likely to include:

- Paper and cardboard
- Cleaning products
- Fertilisers and basic chemicals.

#### Energy efficiency standards

The Government has proposed to increase the stringency of energy efficiency standards for appliances. Changes will increase the availability of information about energy efficiency and assist you in making decisions when purchasing appliances such as air-conditioners, clothes washers and dryers, refrigerators and dishwashers. The Government has also proposed to increase the stringency of energy efficiency standards in the Building Code of Australia (beginning with the 2010 Building Code). The standards apply to a range of building materials including fabrics, sealing, water and space heating, ventilation and air conditioning. These standards apply both for new buildings as well as major refurbishments, extensions and alterations.

### What you can do in your small business

#### No regrets to improve energy efficiency

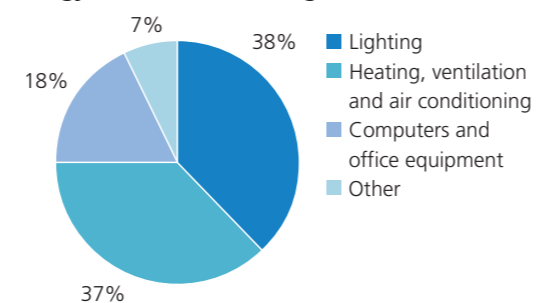
In all cases, we recommend identifying and implementing 'no regrets' actions. No regrets actions are those that will benefit you regardless of the impact of climate change policies. For example,

improving the energy or resource efficiency of your business is likely to provide long-term gains from reduced costs.

Energy efficient appliances and equipment may be more expensive up front, but can result in energy cost savings over a short timeframe. They may also provide other benefits such as water efficiency improvements. If you operate in an office environment, the majority of your energy use is likely to be from:

- Lighting
- Heating, ventilation, cooling and air conditioning systems
- Office equipment.

#### Energy use in office buildings



Source: ecoBiz Queensland

#### Action items for office-based businesses

Some simple actions that can be taken to reduce your energy use and minimise the impact of increased energy costs on your business include:

- Maximising the use of natural ventilation and insulation to reduce air-conditioning and heating
- Setting cooling temperature to as high as possible, and heating temperature to as low as possible. An increase of 1°C in cooling temperature or a decrease of 1°C in heating temperature can reduce energy use by up to ten per cent
- Optimising the operation of your existing heating, ventilation, cooling and air-conditioning system or installing a more efficient system
- Investing in motion sensors or timer switches to reduce unnecessary lighting use, and installing energy efficient lighting
- Turning off computer monitors when not in use
- Replacing traditional monitors with LCD or LED screens can significantly reduce energy consumption.

#### No regrets to reduce waste

In addition to creating land-fill, solid waste releases greenhouse gas emissions as it decomposes. Reducing your waste can be an effective way to minimise costs, and also an effective marketing strategy in terms of

increasing your credentials as an environmentally sustainable business.

The majority of waste for office-based businesses will be paper and cardboard, followed by food scraps.

Actions you can take to reduce your waste include:

- Separating and recycling as much of your waste as possible (glass, paper and most plastics). Composting can also be an effective way to deal with organic waste (this innovation in waste management is increasingly available to commercial premises)
- Working with your suppliers (and customers) to explore opportunities for using re-usable, recyclable or biodegradable packaging
- Introducing recycled paper. Reducing paper use and then recycling it provides both an environmental and economic benefit. Simple steps to reduce paper use include minimising printing of emails and documents, double-sided printing and re-using single-sided 'waste' paper for notes.

The majority of waste for gardening businesses will be organic. In addition to composting, sharing waste removal and recycling costs with other contractors can reduce costs.

Cleaning, pest control and gardening services may also generate a large amount of liquid waste (trade waste). Talk to your water retailer about measures you can take to reduce your trade waste costs.

### Leverage consumer preferences to your market advantage

Concerns about climate change and water scarcity will impact people's choices about what they buy. Providing information about your sustainability activities and the environmental impact associated with your services or products can assist customers with their purchasing decisions and help your business stand out in a crowded market.

Positioning your business as environmentally responsible can also be a strategy for attracting employees and improving employee engagement and satisfaction. Studies have found that employee satisfaction is typically higher in environmentally friendly buildings.<sup>1</sup>

There will be a range of opportunities for developing or selling products and services that assist businesses and individuals to understand and improve their resource efficiency and minimise their carbon footprint.

These products and services could include:

- Accreditation services such as the National Australian Built Environment Rating System, or Green Building Council of Australia's Green Star ratings
- Providing audits of offset methodologies, offset projects and carbon footprint calculations for businesses aiming to voluntarily reduce their carbon footprint or obtain carbon neutral status
- Advice and products for improving energy efficiency of buildings and business processes
- Advice and products for improving the operation of heating, ventilation and cooling systems.

Cleaning services and products in particular are impacted by concerns about the environment. While people still need effective cleaning products, they also want to minimise the impact they have on the environment.

Opportunities for gardening services include:

- Assisting people 'drought-proof' their gardens, either by using recycled water or planting native varieties that are less water intensive
- Educating or providing information to people about how they can reduce their garden's reliance on water
- Providing advice or assisting businesses (and individuals) to manage their organic waste.

### Adapting to climate change

Increased water scarcity will increase prices for water use and water-based products.

The production of cleaning products and chemicals requires large amounts of water. Therefore, water price increases are likely to flow through to increases in prices for these products.

Significant water savings are often possible for office-based businesses. Actions that can be taken to reduce your water use include:

- Purchasing water efficient kitchen and cleaning appliances
- Installing low-flow tap fittings, shower timers and waterless urinals
- Educating staff about water efficiency.

For gardening and cleaning services, implementing water efficient practices will reduce water costs, benefit the environment, and can be an effective marketing strategy.

<sup>1</sup> For example, see S. Abbaszadeh, L. Zagreus, D. Lehrer and C. Huizenga (2006), *Occupant Satisfaction with Indoor Environmental Quality in Green Buildings*, Center for the Built Environment, University of California, and A. Leaman, L. Thomas and M. Vandenberg (2007), *'Green' buildings – What Australian building users are saying*, both available at the Your Building website, <http://www.yourbuilding.org/display/yb/Home>