

How did AusLSA Start?

The Australian Legal Sector Alliance officially commenced in June 2010, but the preparation began long before that. This document explains how AusLSA started, who was involved and why.

CSL

The [Centre for Sustainability Leadership](#) (CSL) runs a programme to encourage people with demonstrated leadership skills to develop projects that lead sustainability change. Melanie Szydzik (now a Victorian barrister) and Alison Dodd (a solicitor at DLA Phillips Fox) both completed the CSL programme with projects focussed on promoting sustainability within the legal sector.

Melanie and Alison were joined by a couple of friends (Roland Dillon, Rupert Watters and later, Meribah Rose), all legal professionals, and developed a proposal to form an association of law firms with the aim to design a set of sustainability principles for law firms to sign up to.

A number of this group of enthusiastic individuals had also initiated the Green Practice programme which was run through the [Law Institute of Victoria](#). Green Practice is ongoing and focuses on educating, networking and training lawyers on how to make their firms more sustainable. Although Green Practice continues to grow in its success, a noticeable gap in the profession was the lack of opportunity for firms to benchmark themselves on issues of sustainability. The Legal Sector Alliance in England and Wales (LSA(UK)) provided a valuable model.

Net Balance Foundation

[Net Balance Management Group](#) is a leading Australian provider of sustainability research, assurance and advice. They have a public commitment to contributing 20% of their staff-time to not-for-profit projects undertaken through the [Net Balance Foundation](#). This work includes conducting research and providing sustainability advisory services to organisations like SMEs, not-for-profit organisations and industry associations.

In 2009, Charlie Knaggs was employed by Net Balance after returning to Australia from London where he was working as a Sustainability Manager at DLA Piper. DLA Piper was central to the formation and development of the LSA(UK) and Charlie contributed significantly to this work.

Net Balance had been engaged by a number of legal firms to deliver sustainability projects. With such valuable industry knowledge and networks, in addition to Charlie's experience with the LSA(UK), Net Balance saw an opportunity to develop a similar organisation in Australia.

AusLSA Organising Committee

After meeting through a mutual acquaintance, the CSL group and Net Balance Foundation identified a common objective, decided to collaborate and formed the AusLSA Organising Committee.

Using Charlie's contacts at LSA(UK) an agreement was reached to utilise the LSA(UK) model and build on the tools and resources they had produced, adapting them for the Australian context.

A key factor for the success of LSA(UK) has been the integral role of the law firms themselves: the programme was created by the sector for the sector. The Organising Committee identified and invited leading law firms to become Foundation Members of AusLSA. Nine firms accepted the responsibility for designing and building the AusLSA programme. Three of these firms were existing Net Balance clients.

All the members of the Organising Committee (including Net Balance Foundation as represented by Charlie) are volunteers and have contributed time and resources to the AusLSA programme.