

lated to greater scrutiny, she says, as they discover 500 million farm animals largely fall outside the protective reach of the legislation.

Lawyers are also questioning whether it is acceptable for the law to classify animals as property, something that "is likely to be addressed through jurisprudence and potentially through strategic litigation in time", Sharman says.

Another speaker at the series, barrister Graeme McEwen, is chair

terly held to a floor area less than the size of an A4 sheet of paper."

McEwen wants the federal government to drive animal law reform and says trade practices laws could be used to prevent producers from marketing their goods "under the guise of animals raised under ideal or enriched conditions".

The lecture series will feature the woman dubbed the mother of the animal-law movement, Joyce Tischler, who hopes to share the lessons

the Coles announcement reflects the power of consumer demands.

BLEATS's 150 lawyer members work pro bono to prosecute cases for the RSPCA and agitate for tougher sentences against those who mistreat or neglect animals.

"It's really changing community attitudes which are driving an increase in interest in organic food and driving them against what they perceive to be cruelty in live exports and things like that," he says.

Firms set up green group

Alex Boxsell

A core group of seven law firms will subject their sustainability programs to scrutiny and develop benchmarks to help the broader profession reduce its impact on the environment.

A new sustainability group, the Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA), has signed up seven founding members that will collectively devise tools needed to reduce waste, energy consumption, the use of paper, freight, and transport ranging from taxis to planes.

The seven firms are: Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Henry Davis York, Maddocks, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, Norton Rose and Swaab Attorneys.

AusLSA project manager Emily Wilson says one of the founding members joined after missing out on winning a tender with a government client because it lacked an adequate sustainability program. "The market is starting to demand that firms have credibility when it comes to sustainability practices," she says.

Australian firms are addressing sustainability in an ad hoc way that lacks objectivity and



Barrister Melanie Szydzik

collaboration, Wilson says, which makes developing benchmarks difficult.

The alliance is working with sustainability consultants Net Balance Foundation and the Law Institute of Victoria's "green practice program", run by LIV Young Lawyers.

Melbourne barrister Melanie Szydzik, who chairs the LIV program and is a member of the alliance's organising committee, says firms are not required to report on sustainability, so "there is very little opportunity for benchmarking and for knowing

what a law firm should aspire to".

The program offers training courses to lawyers and advice on how to institute and monitor sustainability programs. Although firms may have less impact on the environment than other industries, Szydzik says it is important that they reduce their ecological footprint and assess their "cultural footprint".

"The position that they take on important community issues does carry significant weight," she says.

The alliance is based on a group in the UK that has signed up about 200 member firms since it began in 2007. Sixty per cent of those UK firms now carry out regular "carbon footprinting" and have demonstrated annual improvements on carbon emissions, Wilson says.

Other groups already assess sustainability using broader all-industry benchmarks. The St James Ethics Centre runs a corporate responsibility index (CRI), which Henry Davis York is alone in the profession in taking part in.

The CRI includes a survey of businesses on their sustainability practices, which is then assessed by an independent auditor.