



Legally green

A pioneering group of Australian firms have taken the bold step of revealing their carbon footprint as the legal industry moves towards becoming eco-friendly. Briana Everett reports

Australia's first ever report on the environmental consumption of law firms was released last week in an effort to raise awareness and collectively improve the environmental impact of the country's legal industry.

Produced by newly formed sustainability association the Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA), the *Environmental Consumption of AusLSA Members 2009/2010* report revealed the carbon footprint of AusLSA's eight founding executive members, providing a transparent baseline for future sustainability initiatives.

Officially launched by the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull MP, the report exposed the carbon emissions of Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Henry Davis York, Jackson McDonald, Maddocks, McCullough Robertson, Norton Rose Australia and Swaab Attorneys.

"The publication of this report demonstrates a significant commitment by the AusLSA executive members," said Terence Jeyaretnam, the director of sustainability advisory firm Net Balance.

"In Australia, very few law firms have taken the bold step of publicly reporting their environmental footprint. By holding themselves accountable in this way, the AusLSA executive members should be commended for their courage and leadership in working together for the collective good."

As expected, electricity was the main source

of emissions, with the average electricity consumption of alliance members coming in at 3.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per employee.

Second was business travel, contributing to 30.6 per cent of all emissions; not surprisingly, there was substantial variance between firms, with those operating more than one office reporting proportionally more emissions from business travel.

Flights, in all but one firm, were responsible for over 90 per cent of travel-related emissions, standing in contrast to the UK, where flights account for about seven per cent of all emissions. According to the report, this comparison reflects the increased use of carbon-intensive forms of transport such as trains, which is a more effective means of transport in the UK given its geography.

Given the amount of inter-office travel that occurs at law firms, the report identified this as a "quick-win" area for firms looking to reduce their footprint and travel expenditures through the use of technology and planning.

In addition to electricity and travel, the report also included the paper consumption of firms, revealing that despite the availability of new technologies such as iPads, the legal sector is still a heavy consumer of paper.

Results varied significantly among firms, from 80.73 kilograms to 178.1 kilograms per employee, highlighting a key area of improvement for some member firms. On average, 126 kilograms of paper is consumed by each employee every year by each member firm, with Perth-based Jackson McDonald consuming the most per employee.

DLA Phillips Fox, which has just under 1000 employees across Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth, came in with emissions of 4,751.87 tonnes, Norton Rose measured 4,775.32 tonnes, while Henry Davis York performed relatively well with 1,422 tonnes and 80 kilograms of paper consumed by each employee.

Not surprisingly, Clayton Utz – the only top-tier firm to join the alliance so far – topped the list with total emissions of 10,489.44 tonnes of CO₂e. With offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra, Perth and Darwin, and a workforce of more than 1800 employees, flights represented almost 30 per cent of those emissions, while the firm's paper consumption was 109.9 kilograms per employee.

"Our reasons for being involved – even though we're going to be seen as having the biggest footprint – is because it's important to our staff, it's important to our clients and it's important to our community," says Stuart Clark, Clayton Utz's chief operating officer.

"The challenges of a large law firm are huge. We have huge amounts of travel for clients.

We've got the challenge of being involved in huge matters. The consumption of paper is very large – much larger than some other practices."

While Clayton Utz aims to reduce its business travel and paper consumption where possible through the use of technology, the Sydney office is soon relocating to 1 Bligh Street – a six-star, green-rated office building.

"The biggest thing we're going to do – the game changer – is moving into the six-star building. It's designed from the ground up to be sustainable and have low energy consumption. It has a central atrium and the building is double-skinned."

Clark says the new office will help the firm save 100,000 litres of fresh water a day and cut emissions by 42 per cent,



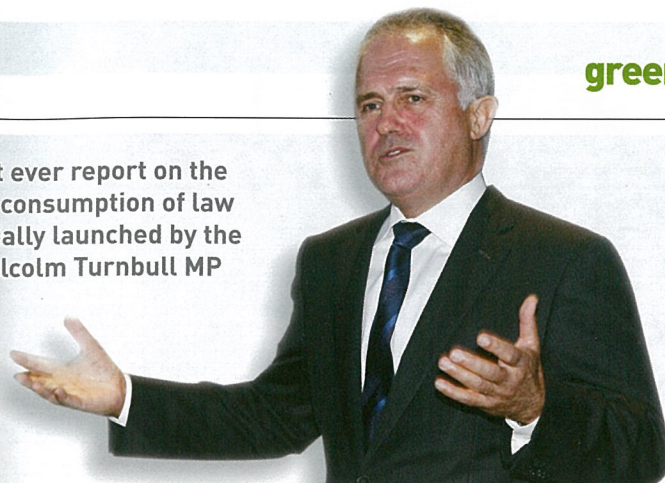
"Our reasons for being involved – even though we're going to be seen as having the biggest footprint – is because it's important to our staff, it's important to our clients and it's important to our community"

STUART CLARK, COO, CLAYTON UTZ

How the firms rank: total emissions

Clayton Utz: 10,489.44 tonnes CO₂e
Norton Rose: 4,775.32 tonnes CO₂e
DLA Phillips Fox: 4,751.87 tonnes CO₂e
Maddocks: 1960.09 tonnes CO₂e
Henry Davis York: 1,422.80 tonnes CO₂e
McCullough Robertson: 1,391.09 tonnes
Jackson McDonald: 615.70 tonnes CO₂e
Swaab Attorneys: 224.96 tonnes CO₂e

Australia's first ever report on the environmental consumption of law firms was officially launched by the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull MP



thanks to the building's double-skin glass façade – a feature designed to improve natural ventilation and reduce the reliance on artificial heating and cooling.

Listing the significant changes the firm has committed to making, Clark urged other firms, particularly other members of the top tier, to take the leap and come on board.

"We're disappointed that more of the major firms haven't stepped up and said, 'OK, well, we have the same issues. What are we doing about it?'," says Clark. "This is about sharing knowledge, sharing best practice and using that knowledge to help each other reduce consumption by regular, steady steps."

At last week's launch, AusLSA co-chair and Henry Davis York chief operating officer Kelvin O'Connor reminded members of the legal profession that the report is aimed at reducing the impact of firms in a collaborative fashion and should not be turned into a league table.

Instead, he said, the alliance's aim is to capture and disclose data and reduce the impact of the legal industry as a whole, noting the importance of measuring to manage.

Also in attendance at the launch was the manager of AusLSA's UK equivalent, Micael Johnstone, who emphasised the effectiveness of collaboration – evidenced by the 200-plus members of the Legal Sector Alliance (UK).

Calling for greater participation from Australian firms, Johnstone highlighted the greater capacity for knowledge sharing to drive change through collaboration, revealing the massive reductions made by UK firms such as Hogan Lovells, which has reduced its footprint by 30 per cent.

Spurred on by the work of the UK and now Australia, the Legal Sector Alliance is making its way to the United States.

"We are now seeing the spread of the same concept in the United States. We're really excited that three of the major New York and Boston firms are getting on board with the USA LSA," says Clark.



5th Annual Industrial and Workplace Relations National Conference 2011

Regulatory, policy and legal updates including case studies

7-8 June 2011, Two-day program

9 June 2011, Post-conference workshops

PARKROYAL Darling Harbour, Sydney

Program highlights

- **General protections:** the new black in workplace law
- **Mental health** and industrial relations
- **Social media:** Employee responsibilities when chatting on line
- The obligation to accommodate **flexible work arrangements**
- **Workplace bargaining** and practical tips on good faith bargaining
- Support mechanisms for those impacted by **natural disasters**
- **Workplace bullying**
- Up to date cases regarding **redundancy**
- Enforcing **post employment restraints**
- Tips & traps when **drafting employment contracts**

Claim up to 18 CPD/MCLE points

Early bird discount expires 6 May 2011

Register Today!

Visit: www.lexisnexis.com.au/pd

Product of:

