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Law firm alliance for sustainability

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A national alliance of law firms formed to promote sustainability across the legal sector will be launched in Sydney later this month.

The Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA) will be launched at the offices of Henry Davis York on 29 March, during which the AusLSA will release its inaugural *Environmental Consumption of AusLSA Members* report.

"[The AusLSA has been formed] to encourage other law firms to share our ideals in sustainability," explained AusLSA co-chair and chief operating officer of Henry Davis York, Kelvin O'Connor. "We will launch our first environmental footprint report [which is] a statement of us putting our credentials on the line."

The report, which is aimed at promoting the development of industry benchmarks and best practice guidelines for firms, will provide data on carbon emissions, consumption of paper and water and waste production.

"[We're trying] to set some benchmarks for the industry as a whole. It's quite a difficult task because different firms engage in different matters and use different amounts of paper. However, our objective is to have some sort of benchmark so that firms can know how they're travelling in comparison to others in the sector," O'Connor said.

AusLSA is modelled on the Legal Sector Alliance in England and Wales which boasts 200 law firms as members, representing more than 30 per cent of private solicitors in England and Wales.

The firms which make-up the initial membership of AusLSA include Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Henry Davis York, Jackson McDonald, Maddocks, McCullough Robertson, Norton Rose Australia and Swaab Attorneys.

"The founding members ought to be congratulated for putting themselves out there with their environmental credentials for everyone to see," said AusLSA co-chair and Maddocks chief executive officer, David Rennick.

"But an important issue is the fact that this is the whole sector getting together. It's not law firm against law firm. It's not a competitive issue - we're actually in this collaboratively. The idea is not for each firm to be pitched against each other but for the firms to actually assist other firms in improving their sustainability performance."

As the first organisation of its kind in the Australian legal industry, Rennick noted the significant interest already received from industry leaders.

"CEOs and managing partners in the industry [have shown] a lot of interest so I think we'll get a lot of firms joining up."

Officially launching the AusLSA will be MP Malcolm Turnbull, with the former deputy premier of Victoria and chair of the Monash Sustainability Institute and ClimateWorks, John Thwaites, as Master of Ceremonies.

Briana Everett