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Posted Jul 30 2010, 12:47 AM by Lawyers Weekly

Sustainability of the legal industry is the driving force behind a new alliance which aims to work collaboratively to promote sustainable practices across the legal sector.

The Australian Legal Sector Alliance (AusLSA) will use benchmarking and knowledge sharing to build best practice sustainability guidelines specific to the Australian legal industry, with the aim of reducing environmental impact and enhancing corporate social responsibility.

The Foundation Members of AusLSA - which is modelled on the UK's Legal Sector Alliance - are Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Henry Davis York, McCullough Robertson, Maddocks, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, Norton Rose Australia and Swaab Attorneys.

The participating firms plan to collaborate to create tools, resources and guidelines to record, report and improve sustainability performances within the sector, and these resources will be offered to all firms that join AusLSA when it is opened to sector-wide membership in 2011.

According to Foundation Members, key motivators for joining AusLSA included identification of opportunities for business efficiencies, enhancement of the legal industry's reputation and growing demand from employees for employers to take sustainability seriously.

Kelvin O'Connor, chief operating officer at Henry Davis York, said: "We see AusLSA as a perfect vehicle to encourage our peers and external stakeholders to adopt the same principles and help develop industry benchmarks that others can adopt."

Brendan Bateman, partner at Clayton Utz, said: "Clayton Utz joined AusLSA with the aim of working with other firms to develop a cohesive, strategic best practice approach to sustainability. Applying these practices will enable Clayton Utz to reach targets and minimise the firm's overall footprint, while at the same time contributing to an industry wide sustainability improvement process."

The AusLSA idea was developed by a group of lawyers in collaboration with the Net Balance Foundation, which provides sustainability advice, assurance and research within Australia.

Terence Jeyaretnam, founding director of Net Balance, said: "AusLSA is an excellent model for bringing together the experience and expertise of member firms to help carve out a path towards a more sustainable sector, while also enhancing the competitiveness of member firms in the market."