



Gold Club Members are businesses that have achieved measurable reductions in at least one resource area of water, waste or energy, and are working towards incorporating environmental sustainability into all business operations.



Helen and husband Norm showing off that they're out with the old and in with the new with their energy efficient light globes.

WOMBAT HILLS COTTAGES

How green is a wombat?

AN AWARD-WINNING 4-STAR BOUTIQUE SPA IN VICTORIA'S PICTURESQUE HIGH COUNTRY HAS MANAGED TO CUT ITS ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION BY 13% AND SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT WITHIN JUST ONE YEAR OF JOINING GROW ME THE MONEY.

"Don't fight nature – work with it!" is the guiding principle for Helen Hookey, owner and manager of Wombat Hills Cottages at Barwite (near Mansfield). Helen has worked hard to ensure that the property – offering three self-contained stone cottages set in acres of beautiful gardens with mountain views – minimises its impact on the environment and remains a safe home for the kangaroos, wallabies, wombats and satin bowerbirds that move freely through the grounds.

Wombat Hills has significantly cut its electricity use and power bills through a combination of commonsense, smart design and investment in readily available efficiency-

increasing technologies. Energy wastage resulting from guest entertainment units left in standby was overcome by installing hand- and foot-operated power boards in each cottage to enable all appliances to be powered off by a single switch.

Heat banks and smart design minimise heating needs. "We designed the main house to exploit passive solar heating," Helen explains. "The orientation blocks out the sun in summer but allows it to warm the house in winter, so we don't need air conditioning and our winter heating costs are reduced. Mud bricks provide great insulation in the cottages." →

HOW WOMBAT HILLS IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION REDUCED BY 13%

- Low-energy compact fluorescent lights (initial cost \$350; savings \$220 per year*)
- Decommissioning of redundant computer hardware, back-up freezer
- Air conditioning energy requirement minimised by resetting thermostats (18°C Winter/23°C Summer), installing heat banks
- Switches installed to prevent appliances being left in standby mode (initial cost \$260; savings \$350 per year*)
- Total saving \$274 and almost 7.35 tonnes of GHG emissions over first 9 months

LANDFILL WASTE REDUCED BY 65 L PER MONTH.

- Recycling bins placed in each cottage: recycling increased by 30% for glass/plastics and 35% for paper/cardboard[‡]
- Toiletries and food purchased in bulk to reduce packaging

OTHER STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- Wood fuel use reduced by replacing older heaters with efficient slow-combustion heaters and avoiding unnecessary use
- Gas consumption reduced by 5%[§] (saving \$136 and 10.5 tonnes of GHG emissions)
- Water consumption minimised by installing water-saving shower heads, water-efficient washing machines and dual-flush toilets
- Chemical waste and pollution minimised with biodegradable cleaning products

* estimates based on previous energy bills; † 1 black balloon = greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 50g carbon dioxide; ‡ by volume; § seasonally adjusted

Running your business doesn't have to cost the earth



Helen shares her story at the launch of Grow Me The Money's first public report, September 2008.

Cosy wood fires are a romantic attraction for visitors to the mountains, so Helen tries to use this natural resource responsibly without sacrificing guests' comfort. The cottage fires are lit only when guests arrive, saving hours' worth of needless fuel consumption. Kindling is no longer purchased from wood suppliers, but collected from the property. Compared with past years, firewood consumption has been reduced by 30% (9 cubic metres) since joining Grow Me The Money, saving \$970 and avoiding an estimated half tonne of carbon dioxide-equivalent greenhouse gas emissions.** An inefficient old combustion heater and an open fireplace have been replaced with a new efficient combustion heater, with estimated further savings of 8 cubic metres or \$325 per year.

"The garden is designed to assist with climate control around buildings," Helen explains. "We're located on a ridge with a magnificent view, but are buffeted by strong winds. We analysed our site and planted wind breaks to block cold winter winds, but we kept areas clear for summer breezes to flow through. Deciduous trees to the north

of buildings provide summer shade but allow the sun through in winter. We created sheltered courtyards so we could enjoy outside living – even in mid winter we can find a warm sunny spot. We also put up shade cloths from November to April."

"The garden is designed to assist with climate control around buildings"

"All this has reduced the heating and cooling required. In the residence we manage well without air-conditioning. When the outside temperature is in the thirties, the house is generally at about 23 degrees Celsius."

"We are not connected to a town water supply, so rainwater is collected from the roof of each building and stored in five tanks and three dams. To preserve this precious commodity, we use tank water for drinking and washing, and dam water for toilets and gardens. All our tank water is filtered and

exposed to UV light to ensure that the water is free of bacteria and chemicals and our 'grey' water from the laundry flows on to the garden."

The Mansfield community shows strong interest in caring for the environment, and Helen is keen to encourage other business operators.

"For the last 12 months I've been leading a diverse group of local businesses in working through the Grow Me The Money program. Our efforts are publicised through the local newspaper in the hope that other businesses or individuals will take up some ideas or will be able to approach someone they know in the group for ideas."

Helen's enthusiasm has paid off, with the Mansfield district becoming one of Grow Me The Money's strongest participating regions.

www.wombathills.com.au

** Calculated using conversion factor for firewood collected from dead trees and dead fallen wood published in Life cycle assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from domestic woodheating, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, 2003.

Grow Me The Money is a free program for Victorian small- to medium-sized businesses to help them to reduce their impact on the environment and save money doing it.

We guide participating businesses through the process of measuring and reducing their energy use, water consumption and waste output.

For more information on how we can help your business, visit www.growmethemoney.com.au