



Environmental Attitudes and Practices in Victorian Business

Survey Results
April 2007



Executive Summary:

Environmental performance is increasingly becoming a key part of everyday business operations. VECCI has undertaken this survey to examine environmental attitudes and practices in Victorian businesses. The survey sample included 91 Victorian businesses from a wide range of industries and regions. The key findings are outlined below.

Demographics

- Two thirds of responses came from Owners, CEO's and Managing Directors who represent the bulk of decision makers.
- Responses roughly reflected the geographical breakdown of business location (Melbourne CBD 23%, Melbourne metropolitan 45% and regional Victoria 32%).
- Responses from small business outnumbered medium/larger businesses 2 to 1
- There was a wide spread of types of business represented in the survey responses with the largest numbers being from accommodation and foodservices and manufacturing

Key Findings

- At least half of the respondents were unaware of their current water, waste and energy usage over the past six months
- Employees are exerting the single greatest pressure to change. Four out of ten businesses say that their employees are demanding changes to improve environmental performance (25% say pressure from customers and about the same say expectation or opportunity coming from industry. A third say requirement or expectation of government)
- Social or community responsibility is the most important motivation to make changes in businesses with two thirds of businesses putting this slightly ahead of financial benefit (64%), environmental damage (53%) customer demand (41%) and Government regulation (39%).
- Around half those surveyed say that current environmental issues have had an effect on their business. This is split between a positive and a negative effect. Another quarter says it has had no effect to date.
- Businesses have made a conscious effort to reduce water consumption with more than 50% actively taking measures to reduce their usage. Half of Victoria's businesses feel they are efficient or very efficient in their water usage but 40% say that more needs to be done.
- Overwhelmingly, 81% businesses believe that carbon emissions contribute to global warming. Two thirds believe that their business contributes to Australia's level of carbon emissions and 4 out of 10



intend taking steps to reduce this in the next 12 months with most of these planning to take even shorter term action.

- Disturbingly over one third of businesses have no intention of action and 13% are unsure about doing anything.
- Over half of the businesses surveyed say they have made other changes in the past twelve months that will benefit the environment. These include:
 - Water reduction initiatives such as; altered production methods, use of bore water and grey water, installation of rain water tanks, recycling of waste water, solar hot water, water saving shower heads, water education, drought tolerant plants and smart technology water systems.
 - Waste reduction initiatives such as; diverting waste from landfill, buying less, using recycled paper for stationary, reusing one side printed paper, special bins for paper recycling, organic waste disposal and general recycling.
 - Energy initiatives such as; changing to green energy, conserving power, using low energy lighting, utilising natural light where ever possible and switching power off at the end of each business day.
 - Other initiatives include; developing environmental management plans, incorporating the environment into building design, environmental audits, gathering quotes from environmental consultants and involvement in sustainability software pilot programs.
- Almost half those surveyed believe that making environmentally beneficial changes will save them money
- Business believes that households have been making the most significant progress in reducing the impact on the environment. On a rating of 1 to 10 businesses scored households at an average of 6 whilst they gave themselves and government a score of around 4.
- About half the businesses surveyed have environmental policies compared with 82% with OHS policies and around 70% with equal opportunity and bullying policies.
- Water (38%) followed closely by electricity and waste are identified as the most important environmental issues facing their businesses. Electricity is the area where businesses feel they have the ability to make changes to reduce impact on the environment (water and waste follow closely)
- Seven out of ten businesses are undaunted at the idea of making environmental changes.



- The majority of businesses welcome a free online program
- Cost and time are the most important barriers to making change. Resources and knowledge have a lesser influence.
- Funding and financial incentives, legislation and a coordinated approach would help overcome these challenges.



Survey Questions

Demographic Questions:

I am a

- a) Business Owner / CEO / Managing Director / Senior manager
- b) Financial manager / Administration Manager / Office Manager
- c) Other. Please specify _____

My business is located in

- a) Metropolitan Melbourne
- b) Suburban Melbourne
- c) Provincial Victoria (Rural and Regional)

My business can be described as

- a) Small (less than 20 FTE staff)
- b) Medium (21-100 FTE staff)
- c) Large (100+ FTE staff)

My business is within the following industry sector:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Mining
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- Construction
- Wholesale Trade
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- Information, Media and Telecommunications
- Financial and Insurance Services
- Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Public Administration and Safety
- Education and Training
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Arts and Recreation Services
- Other Services



Environmental Attitudes and Practices Questions:

Q1) In the last six months do you know how much energy your business has used?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q2) In the last six months do you know how much water your business has used?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q3) In the last six months do you know how much waste your business has produced?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q4) Have you noticed a change in demand to improve your business's environmental standards in the last 12 months, from?

Customers

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

If yes please indicate what the demand has been _____

Employees of your business

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

If yes please indicate what the demand has been _____

Business/industry

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

If yes please indicate what the demand has been _____

Government

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

If yes please indicate what the demand has been _____

Q5) Do you believe current environmental issues facing Victorians (drought, climate change, global warming, increased greenhouse emissions) have had an effect on your business?

- a) positive effect
- b) negative effect
- c) no effect
- d) unsure



Q6) Has your business reduced its use of water in the last 12 months?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

Q7) How would you rate your business's current water usage?

- a) Very efficient
- b) Efficient
- c) We need to do more
- d) We need to do a lot more

Q8) Do you believe carbon emissions contribute to global warming?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

Q9) Do you think your business contributes to Australia's level of carbon emissions?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure

Q10) Is your business planning on taking steps to reduce its carbon emissions in the next?

- a) 1-6 months
- b) one year
- c) two years
- d) no plans
- e) unsure

Q11) In the past 12 months has your business made any other changes which you believe will benefit the environment?

- a) yes, please specify _____
- b) no
- c) unsure

Q12) Do you believe making changes to benefit the environment in your workplace will?

- a) Cost you money
- b) Save you money
- c) Not change
- b) Unsure



Q13) In the past twelve months do you believe significant progress has been made in reducing the impact on the environment by (please rank on a scale 1-10) (Please note - 1 indicates no changes have been made to improve the environment. 10 indicates significant changes have been made to improve the environment)

- a) Households _____
- b) Big business _____
- c) Small to medium business _____
- d) Government _____

Q14) Does your business have policies on the following topics?

Occupational Health and Safety

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

Equal Opportunity

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

Environment

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

Bullying

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) unsure

Q15) What do you see as the most important environmental issues facing your business today? (Please tick – you can select more than one answer)

- a) Water
- b) Electricity
- c) Waste (i.e. packaging, metals, paper or toxic waste)
- d) Other, please state _____

Q16) In which areas do you think your business has the ability to make changes to help reduce its impact on the environment? (Please tick – you can select more than one answer)

- a) Water
- b) Electricity
- c) Waste (i.e. packaging, metals, paper or toxic waste)
- d) Other, please state _____



Q17) What would motivate you to make changes to your business to benefit the environment *(Please tick - you can select more than one answer)*

- a) government regulation
- b) financial benefit
- c) environmental damage
- d) customer demand
- e) social or community responsibility
- f) trade requirements
- g) other, please state _____

Q18) If your business would like to make further environmental changes but hasn't, what are the main factors preventing you from doing so? *(Rate your answers below from 1-5 in order of most important to least important)*

- a) cost ____
- b) time ____
- c) resources ____
- d) knowledge ____
- e) other, please state _____

Q19) What sort of assistance/guidance would help you overcome these challenges?

Q20) Do you find the idea of making environmental changes in your business daunting?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q21) Would a program that is free to join and offers online resources to show your business how to become more environmentally friendly be beneficial to your business?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Unsure