

REGARDLESS of the debate about emissions trading or global warming, business will soon have to take significant environmental responsibility for its heavy use of carbon-intensive non-renewable electricity.

Ageing infrastructure and an emission trading scheme are set to substantially increase energy costs; some analysts predict prices will double over the next three years. A recent survey by the Australian Industry Group found that only 10 per cent of companies had the knowledge to deal with climate change, yet 80 per cent wanted to do something about it.

Taking action need not be a threat to our economy or a business bottom line. In fact, a study by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst found that a \$US100 billion green investment package would create two million jobs — nearly four times more jobs than spending the same amount of money within the oil

green power

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industry — and would reduce the US unemployment rate to 4.4 per cent over two years.

Many people have implemented energy saving measures at home such as replacing light bulbs, but the business sector is lagging as it waits for clearer government regulation and compelling financial incentives.

The business sector is responsible for more than a third of all emissions yet we are witnessing far more action in the domestic sector with the installation of rainwater tanks, solar panels and roof insulation.

Most astute business people acknowledge the benefits of taking action, even if it is only to save money

as energy costs skyrocket. Some of the risks of not taking action are that eco-conscious competitors will take greater market share, costs of regulatory compliance will rise significantly in the future and large organisations required to report on carbon emissions will only deal with environmentally friendly suppliers.

The single most effective first step for the business sector is to simply switch off. Energy use from lighting, air conditioning and electrical equipment accounts for the major proportion of greenhouse gas emissions.

A basic energy saving checklist for businesses large and small include:

- Install sensor lighting and turn off all lights and appliances at night, on weekends and over holidays;
- Reduce heating or cooling by two degrees at the thermostat;
- Install shades on windows to cut cooling costs;
- Buy only five-star energy rated appliances;

- Turn off all non-essential electronic equipment at the power point when not in use as stand-by can use just as much energy as when in use;
- Stop photocopying and faxing — scan and email instead;
- Upgrade desktops to laptops (they use half the energy) and dispose of old PCs responsibly;
- Use low energy flat panel monitors and carefully dispose of old CRTs;
- Check all appliances with a simple meter to identify power hogging devices;
- Switch to green power to support the alternative energy sector.

Green business now makes good commercial sense.

Tony Hall is CEO of environmental business certification company, GreenBizCheck, which offers sustainability programs to maximise businesses' green credentials. Go to greenbizcheck.com