

Keeping a lid on the dregs

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Sustainability: Vivo Cafe owner Angela Vithoukas. Picture: John Fotiadis Source: The Daily Telegraph

VIVO Cafe makes a mean mocha and has a strong emphasis on going green. CEO Angela Vithoukas, winner of the 2007 NSW Telstra Business Women's Owner of the Year award, manages a team of 15 and acts as speaker and small business champion.

"I realised that even though VIVO is a small business, it was leaving a very big carbon footprint. I wanted the business to operate in a more environmentally sustainable way," she said.

Ms Vithoukas obtained GreenBizCheck certification and "we made a conscious effort to maintain the standard. The biggest change that we made was to introduce bio-degradable takeaway cups.

"VIVO sells around 15,000 takeaway coffees a week and I decided that this was a very serious and urgent matter to address," the dynamic business leader said.

"I felt that this would have the biggest impact as we are saving money and our customers have a visualisation of what we're trying to do.

"As part of the fit-out we made several changes that reduce our costs and reduce our impact on the environment. One aspect is regular maintenance treatment of

our refrigeration. We have such a lot of refrigeration. The special treatment prevents a lot of dust sticking to the fans, which means the fridges are more reliable, they perform better, they have fewer breakdowns and use less power."

VIVO also installed a program to reduce lighting use, plus the cafe chairs -- all 200 of them -- are constructed of 100 per cent recycled material.

"All of this helps us to contribute to the green star rating of the building," Ms Vithoukias said.

"By changing to the bio-degradable cups, customers have now become part of the process.

"They choose to buy their coffee from us and are supporting our initiatives to be more responsible in the service of our customers.

"I've been able to follow through and make sustainability a viable part of the business.

"We save around 15 per cent on the cost of the cups and a similar amount on the cost of electricity thanks to the changes we've made."

GreenBizCheck helps small- to medium-sized businesses with sustainability. Go to greenbizcheck.com for more information.