

# Why green business is good

By Noeline Davis

HAVE we been blaming controversy for our lack of action on environment, when in reality it belongs firmly in the hands of business?

If not, what is stopping business from becoming environmentally savvy? Fear is pretty powerful; we tend to associate anything environmental with extremists and bad press.

Take, for example, the Franklin River protests in the early 1980s that ultimately stopped a dam being built, but had 1440 arrests as casualties along the way.

No matter what your views are on environment it has tended to be something with no middle ground.

The issues are so fraught with confusion, science and politics that we can be afraid to express an opinion without a doctorate. If nothing else we fear being labelled politically incorrect!

Maybe closer to the truth, business people just don't have time to make sense of the environment and sustainability tangle, and can't afford to damage the business with the "wrong" opinion.

So, what if we take the hippy out of the problem and the politics out of the solution and really think about this as business people? The question then becomes, what in the environmental arena will impact the bottom line?

With this change in thinking, suddenly it becomes simple: the business bottom line is impacted, among other things, by



costs and resource use, customer and staff attitudes, and marketing strategies that deliver an edge.

Smart business logic tells us that reducing resource use reduces costs and increases profits; brings in customers and staff that want to deal with environmentally responsible businesses; leads to sustainability credentials to add to the marketing tool kit; and, ultimately and simply, improves the bottom line.

With the taboos and fear pushed aside the answer is there: green business is good business but how and where do we start.

Business owners know there is government assistance available but are confused by the ever-changing options, the myriad of websites and the seemingly insurmountable pile of forms to fill in. How, for instance, does one know if there is benefit in the new Climate Change Grant Program?

Owners and managers may have a basic understanding of requirements and regulations but be unclear what applies to

their operation.

As an example, some business owners may not have heard of the mandatory obligations applicable under the Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Act 2010, let alone know whether there is relevance to their business.

Then there are the range of schemes and programs with words like reduction and responsibility in the by-line and large dollar signs and time commitments in the fine print.

The majority are undoubtedly a great way to help the environment but business owners perhaps simply don't have the time and often can't see a compelling connection to business performance.

So, with perceptions of controversy on one side and impossible solutions on the other it is hardly surprising businesses avoid going green.

However, that thinking can no longer be maintained, as governments, supply chains and consumers increase the pressure

on businesses to behave sustainably; and not just with policy but with real action.

Whether due to new taxes or regimes, or the inescapable rising energy prices, it is the time for business to take the reins.

The message must come from every boardroom that green business is good business.

From that statement the strategies get easier. Information on government assistance is gradually being provided. Programs such as GreenBizCheck certification provide the action plan.

There are now tools within reach, with no business risk, which will help both the business and the environment.

The evidence is in. Good business actions to reduce waste, energy and water consumption, and implement transport and supply chain policies, have reduced environmental impact.

As humans we have often put our needs ahead of the natural environment's capacity to satisfy our hunger for an increasingly better lifestyle.

It is also true that human proliferation will come at a very high price for the environment if we don't take sustainability seriously.

Nevertheless it will be the business owner's understanding that sustainability makes commercial sense that will lead the charge.

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