

ASU Clean & green guide 2011



How to make your workplace environmentally friendly
by the Australian Services Union Victorian Private Sector

A green message from the union's leaders

The ASU Victorian Private Sector Branch represents people working on the frontline in customer service, call centres, office, clerical and administration roles.

Working in either the private or community sector, our members are employed by companies such as Qantas, Foxtel and Target, and organisations such as Oxfam, the RSPCA and Australian Conservation Foundation. They may be working full-time, part-time or in temporary positions.

We work alongside our members to advance their terms of employment and working conditions, and to provide them with a stronger voice in the workplace and wider community. We make use of industrial, social and political campaigns to support and defend the working interests of our members.

Part of this support extends to matters of widespread importance such as the environment and the future of our planet.

With the climate change message finally starting to filter through from governments to employers to everyday people and their families, the ASU encourages all of its members and their employers to take greater personal responsibility for behaviours and actions that can have a negative impact on the environment.

When it comes to the workplace, the ASU believes that, in many cases, a far more pro-active approach is required by employers in particular to encourage responsible, sustainable and environmentally friendly working practices.

The information contained in this clean & green office guide is far from definitive, but it may be helpful to members who wish to take the first steps towards a more sustainable workplace.

It is remarkable how a few simple changes in the way we use power and paper in the office can make such a difference to the environment.



Ingrid Stitt
Branch Secretary



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How can you make your office more environmentally friendly?

A FEW QUICK IDEAS

There are many ways organisations can make environmentally friendly improvements. The list below has a number of the more obvious tried-and-true measures.

All workplaces are different, however, and what works for one may not necessarily work for another.

Paper Consumption

1. Edit on a computer screen when possible. Avoid printing documents.

Ask the following questions:

- Do I need all of the pages?
- Can I condense the information into one sheet of paper?
- Can I reduce the margins?
- Can I print double-sided? Or two pages to one sheet?
- Can I use the back as scrap paper to take notes?

2. Scan documents when possible. Convert paper documents to PDF files so that everyone can see the document without using paper. You can also save documents to disk.

3. Use email to communicate and send documents whenever possible.

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Use energy-saving light bulbs. Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) save energy and money in the long run

Energy Conservation

1. Buy energy star-approved computers, monitors, peripherals, TVs and appliances.
2. Turn off computers and printers after work.
3. Use energy-saving light bulbs. Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) save energy and money in the long run.
4. Put computers to sleep. Screensavers waste energy, but a computer on sleep mode does not.
5. Turn off lights. If working in an office with windows use natural light for the office.
6. Don't mess with the thermostat. Try to keep the office at a manageable temperature. Move furniture away from heaters to ensure efficient performance. Switch heating off at weekends and on holidays.
7. Don't use heaters at your feet unnecessarily.

Recycling

1. Ensure recycling bins are available and accessible in all office areas, and label them appropriately. Don't assume people will know it's a recycling bin.
2. Use recycled materials. Recycled paper, toner and ink cartridges are essential for greening an office, especially considering the amount of paper most office workers use every day.
3. Re-use envelopes. Put a label over the existing address or use the same inter-office mailing envelopes many times.
4. Outfit your kitchen with reusable plates, utensils and serving items. Remove disposable cups and plastic utensils in all office kitchens. This will encourage people to wash and re-use their own cutlery.

WORKPLACE GREEN POLICY

Many companies have established policies to better define and advance their environmental goals.

An environmental policy sends a clear message to employees, management, suppliers and the community at large that your company considers environmentally friendly practices to be an organisational priority.

Involving staff members at all levels is essential to the successful environmental performance of your workplace.

ASU members can encourage the formation within the workplace of an environment committee of interested staff members to help develop, oversee and implement a mutually agreed plan with targets and achievable goals.

These goals should be measurable and the committee should be able to provide feedback and suggestions to all relevant departments within the organisation.



RECYCLING, WASTE MANAGEMENT

Recycling is one of the most common of all environmentally friendly workplace activities. It is relatively simple and painless, and is a great way

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Companies can institute purchasing policies that give preference to environmentally friendly products

to involve staff at all levels in your company's environmental priorities. By recycling paper, cardboard, metals, plastics and glass in your workplace you can keep useful products out of landfills and incinerators. This will help to reduce the harmful environmental impact of disposing of these products.

Recycling protects natural environmental habitats, and saves energy, water, and resources such as trees and metal ores.

Choosing products manufactured from recycled content, such as office stationery, also helps reduce the negative impact your organisation has on the environment.

PURCHASING POWERS

In an effort to enhance environmental performance, companies can institute purchasing policies that give preference to environmentally friendly products. Purchasing policies can be comprehensive and cover a wide range of products and services.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The ASU has produced a range of pro-forma documents that can be used in workplaces, including draft letters to employers and suppliers; draft memos to staff; and a range of other resources, ideas and options for delegates and interested ASU members in all workplaces to use in their everyday efforts to curb the environmental impact of their workplace. For further information or for a CD copy of any of the above resources or guidelines please contact **Assistant Branch Secretary David Leydon** at the **Australian Services Union** on (03) 9320 6700 or email: dleydon@asupsvic.org.