



Mission Australia

TRANSFORM



A line in the sand



Proving and improving Mission Australia's
social and environmental performance

A summary report

2007



A Message From The Executive Leader, Community Services

It is now very clear that each of us, individuals and all sizes and types of organisations, need to make a commitment to becoming more sustainable. I am pleased to say that we have been true to our word in ruling 'a line in the sand' in continuing on our journey towards sustainability. As an extremely busy and lean not-for-profit organisation with a range of diverse services, we have chosen to take the journey in steps. This has involved adopting an approach that is manageable, as well as meaningful.

A full sustainability report will be available on the Mission Australia website. The report will include descriptions of the processes involved, the methodology used and the survey results.

In Queensland during 2005, four services took part in a Pilot Project. While the pilot encompassed both the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability the rollout to fifteen service locations in 2007 has initially focused on one dimension, the environmental. Once truly satisfied that we are well equipped to expand environmental accountability out to more services, we will embark on integrating the social and economic dimensions of the sustainability equation.

Five environmental objectives were chosen. These are linked to Mission Australia's values, with outcomes and impacts in relation to these objectives assessed through both qualitative and quantitative measures. We have continued to draw on a sustainability accounting framework designed for our sector that has proven to be both comprehensive and rigorous.

I remain impressed with staff for their passion and determination to make this project work and to incorporate it in with day-to-day operations. Many staff have taken to the project with gusto and ingenuity and their contributions have been invaluable. I am also grateful to others who have assisted us in our journey, such as The Australian Greenhouse Office and The University of Queensland.

Sustainability is also on Mission Australia's National agenda with a Steering Committee and Working Group formed in early 2008. In addition to supporting the Queensland project, the Committee will focus on other sustainability issues including developing an organisational resource-use 'footprint'. The Committee will also develop strategies for internal communication, finding external sustainability partners, procurement initiatives and identifying state and service sustainability champions.

The combination of the Queensland and National sustainability initiatives will ensure that Mission Australia will continue to provide leadership and improved environmental performance in the future.

Perseverance

Respect

Celebration

Integrity

Compassion

Right: The wall was created by an enthusiastic member of staff, Terri Melville, at Mission Australia's Employment Services, Gympie. It is located in a prominent position in the main job seekers' room.



Results

Our resource use and carbon footprint was measured across the 15 service locations that participated in the project. These services employed 174.4 staff (full time equivalent). The period covered was from July 2007 to February 2008.

Feedback from staff was received via surveys issued to all Queensland services in July 2007, and again in February 2008. Of the 700 possible responses, we received 304 responses to all or part of the initial survey, and 137 staff responded to the follow-up survey. Results are reported for participating services as well as others not involved in the project and these results are compared.

Our impact

The following emission estimates are based on direct operational emissions. We consider this a worthwhile start to defining our carbon footprint.

July 2007 to February 2008

- Our total greenhouse gas emissions for participating services were 459.20 tonnes of CO₂-e.
- Our greenhouse gas emissions per full time employee were 2.63 tonnes of CO₂-e, equating to 0.328 tonnes of CO₂-e per month per employee.
- Staff responses indicated an improvement in the strength of Mission Australia's environmental performance, especially in relation to behaviours to reduce fuel usage.

The outcomes

Overall:

- The environmental objectives chosen by the project team were rated as having high importance by more than 70% of respondents;
- 98% of respondents had some level of interest in the project;
- 63% of respondents indicated that they were able to make 'small changes' in the way the project operated.

Follow-up surveys also indicated:

- A greater awareness amongst participating services of the contribution of the project in achieving objectives;
- An overall improvement across the five objectives, suggesting an increasing awareness throughout the organisation of the need to reduce environmental impacts;
- Participating services generally outperformed other services, suggesting that the project can help improve the environmental performance of the organisation;
- There was a significant improvement in the strength of three out of five of Mission Australia's values.

Project Goal

To use environmentally sustainable practices reflecting the values of “PERSEVERANCE” and “INTEGRITY”

Project objectives

- To reduce the use of electricity and gas
- To reduce the use of fuel
- To reduce the use of paper
- To reduce water usage

Optional objective

- Use of environmentally friendly products

Some of the activities undertaken by services

Electricity

- Ensuring (where possible) all electrical equipment is shut down at the end of the day and that lights are turned off when a room is not in use
- Using energy efficient light bulbs as replacements are required
- Installing separate light switches where appropriate
- Setting air conditioning at appropriate temperatures

Fuel

- Car pooling to work related events
- Driving in a more environmentally friendly manner
- Reducing the need for plane travel
- Replacing 6 cylinder vehicles with 4 cylinder vehicles

Waste

- Using both sides of paper when photocopying and/or printing
- Recycling used paper
- Using ceramic crockery
- Sending toner cartridges for recycling

Water

- Installing dual flush toilets
- Installing water resistors
- Ensuring dishwashers are full before operating
- Repairing water leakage

Our Values, our Objectives and the Sustainability Project – What Staff Said



Above: Our partners in the project: Sally Russell from the University of Queensland's Business School receiving a 'thank you' gift from Mission Australia. Sally surveyed staff about the project.

Issue	Outcomes	
	Initial Response	Six Months On
<p>Living up To our values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents generally agree that Mission Australia lived up to its values well. • While many of the small number of comments received were positive, others suggested room for improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents continued to generally agree that Mission Australia lived up to its values well. • There was a significant increase reported in the strength of three out of the five values. • While many of the small number of comments received were positive, others suggested room for improvement.
<p>Importance of objectives for Mission Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All objectives were viewed as important. • Results suggest that participating services viewed environmental objectives as more important than respondents from other services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those from participating services continued to view environmental objectives as being more important than respondents from other services. • Services involved in the project indicated a significant increase in the importance of reducing electricity and gas usage and reducing waste.
<p>Interest in project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% of respondents indicated some level of interest in the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a slight decrease in the level of interest in the project across all services.
<p>Level of influence over the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63% of staff indicated that they are able to make 'small changes' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although relatively stable, there was a slight increase in the level of influence across all services.
<p>Project success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question not included in the initial survey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with other services there was greater awareness amongst participating services of the contribution of the project in achieving objectives.

Resource Use

			What Staff Think
			Perceptions of Mission Australia's Level of Success
Resource	Resource Use July to February	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Initial Response
USE OF ELECTRICITY/EMISSIONS KWh per full time employee	2150.74 KWh	1.9571 tonnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating services scored Mission Australia higher for success in reducing electricity and gas usage.
USE OF GAS Megajoules per full time employee	2.67 Mjoules	.00018 tonnes	
USE OF FUEL /EMISSIONS Litres per full time employee	268.40 Litres	0.6150 tonnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses indicate moderate success
USE OF WATER/EMISSIONS Litres per full time employee	Data not available due to services having insufficient information	Not available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses indicate moderate success
WASTE Resource use recorded focused on paper use per full time employee. Surveys covered paper, glass, plastic, aluminium, toner; crockery.	9.71 reams	.0607 tonnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses indicate moderate success.
USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses indicate moderate success.

What Staff Said

What Staff Said They Did Individual and Workplace Behaviours		
Six months on	Initial Response	Six months on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scores largely unchanged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial responses were very mixed (e.g. high consistency with turning off lights and inconsistency in use of energy efficient bulbs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most behaviours were reported to have improved across all services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater success was reported by participating services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 85% of respondents almost always travelled by car. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All services reported a dramatic reduction in car use to and from work, and for work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All services reported a reduction in water use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial responses were very mixed (e.g. 76% indicated dual flush toilets installed, water resisters on taps rarely installed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a significant improvement in reports of dual flush toilets being installed in services not participating in the project. There was a significant improvement within participating services of ensuring dishwashers were full.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating services reported significant improvement, other services a slight improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial responses were very mixed (e.g. 76% recycled paper; 47% printed emails). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most behaviours improved across all services, with participating services outperforming others. However, participating services were reported as outperformed by other services in three behaviours.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating services reported significant improvement, other services a slight improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69% of respondents rarely look for environmental impact of purchases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a significant improvement in the frequency of looking for the environmental impact of purchases. This increase was larger for participating services.



A team approach to the project is an invaluable component of the project's success.

From left, Marcelle Holdaway, Eschleigh Balzamo, Brian Coffey (Project Leader), Keith Brown, Glenda Jones-Terare, Terri Melville, Fiona Robinson.

Our approach

The framework

Mission Australia Queensland has primarily utilised the Social Audit Network framework, developed in the United Kingdom, to guide our sustainability accounting, while referring to other frameworks, standards and tools as additional resources.

The beginnings – 2004

Our journey towards sustainability began in late 2004 with a Queensland based Pilot Project. The Project involved three services producing a set of 'sustainability accounts' covering the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. These accounts were externally audited and verified. Results were later summarised in 'A Line in the Sand' and this report was launched in early 2006 as part of our public accountability.

Scope

Roll out – 2007

The roll out proceeded with fifteen service locations. To improve manageability this cycle has initially focused on one dimension, 'the environmental'. We also focused on our values and the project itself. To assist with matters environmental, we developed a 'Green Office Package'. This consisted of The Plan, an Activities List and a Recording Spreadsheet. The package, along with initial and follow-up surveys, provided both the qualitative and quantitative data required to prove and improve our environmental performance and impact.

It must be noted that many of our services are conducted from rental premises. It was therefore often difficult to obtain accurate data and to undertake relevant activities. This was particularly the case in relation to water and electricity use.

Objectives

The Project Team, consisting of representatives from staff and management, identified suitable objectives. Staff throughout Queensland were then consulted on their views of the level of importance of these objectives.

Ideally we would have included all possible environmental objectives. However, to ensure staff were not overwhelmed, we prioritised our choice of objectives.

Our stakeholders

The Project Team initially identified staff and suppliers as key stakeholder groups relevant for consultation around the project's Goal and Objectives. As the project evolved it became clear that engaging landlords and local government was also imperative. At this initial stage of the project we chose to focus solely on staff because without their commitment the project would not be effective. Engaging suppliers, landlords and local government will occur during the next stages of the project.

Moving forward

Moving forward – our commitments

We have:

- Agreement from State management to expand the project to all Queensland based services;
- Upgraded the recording and reporting mechanism;
- Enabled each service to make a dollar commitment to sustainability within their budgets.

In the next 12 months we will:

- Require that the project be part of the formal activities and reporting for all services in Queensland;
- Consult other key stakeholders – landlords, local government and suppliers;
- Run a series of workshops for all services, thereby incorporating training and awareness. These workshops would also seek staff contribution and support as well as engage them on their role in the project;
- Assess opportunities and put procedures in place for increased environmental efficiency, including drawing on recommendations contained in the surveys;
- Provide Starter Kits to all services to coincide with the roll out;
- Expand to services outside of Queensland as part of our contribution to the National sustainability strategy;
- Audit our wider program at one of the milestone periods;
- Continue to engage and partner with other organisations;
- Introduce the social dimension.

We aim for:

- A 10% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions per full time employee;
- A greater number of services using recycled paper;
- A higher percentage of staff knowing how they can help achieve objectives;
- Further improvement in the percentage of staff agreeing that Mission Australia lives up to its values well.

Marcelle Holdaway, Accounting for Life, has partnered the project through mentoring and coordination and by compiling this report.

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“In setting out on this journey, we have made the decision to rule a line in the sand to celebrate our successes and to forever state that we want to be better. My hope is that organisations in the Community Services sector can benefit from and build on our work, just as we have followed in the footsteps of others.”

**Lincoln Hopper, Executive Leader,
Community Services**

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national, not-for-profit, non-denominational Christian organisation that provides services throughout metropolitan, rural and regional Australia. These services include family support, youth and adult employment and training and community building initiatives. The organisation has a network of more than four hundred and fifty service locations around Australia.

Our vision

Our vision is to see a fairer Australia by enabling people in need to find pathways to a better life.

Our mission

Walking alongside those in need, we help people discover:

- Pathways to strong families and happy, healthy children
- Pathways through a successful youth
- Pathways away from homelessness
- Pathways to skills and qualifications
- Pathways to sustainable employment.

Our Values

Perseverance

We are committed to being the very best we can be, finding effective, creative and environmentally responsible ways to fulfil our mission.

Integrity

We are committed to being honest, accountable, transparent and just in all our work and relationships.

Respect

We are committed to treating each person as we expect to be treated, offering love, acceptance and a voice of support in the face of life's challenges.

Compassion

We are committed to being sensitive, understanding and caring in our service of each other and all people.

Celebration

We are committed to recognising and celebrating the efforts and achievements of our staff, supporters and the people we help.



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