



The Business of Global Warming

What is global warming? Expert environmental biologist **Jean Cannon** explains why you should pay attention

THERE IS SO MUCH HYPE, INFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION ABOUT GLOBAL warming, greenhouse emissions and the need to go green that many people, and especially businesses, are very confused and just hope that it will all go away. The problem is that the cost of delaying action is far greater than the cost of doing something now.

GLOBAL WARMING

Global warming is a symptom of atmospheric pollution so let's put it into perspective. The earth has warmed and cooled in the past but now we have added atmospheric pollution! We have actually changed the chemical composition of the earth's atmosphere and we

are continuing to do so. We have a manmade insulating layer of polluted atmosphere, or greenhouse gases, that lets the sun's rays in but lets less than normal of the reflected rays out.

WE NEED TO ACT NOW

Pouring excess CO₂, Methane, NO_x (oxides of nitrogen) and other gases into the air is pollution and this risks even greater financial

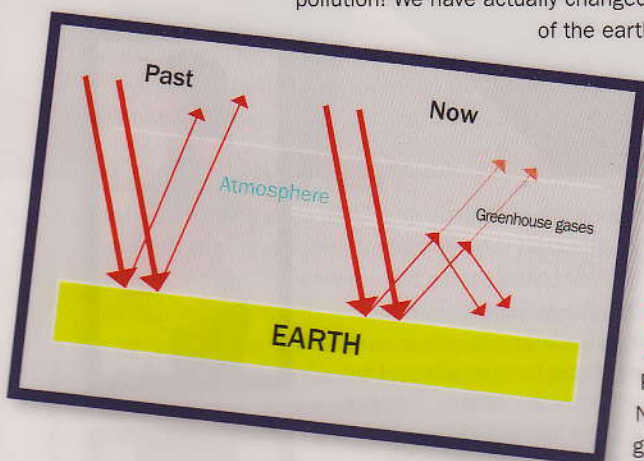
chaos than we have at present, while also putting our children and grandchildren's future at risk. We ignore it at their peril. Three countries contribute far more greenhouse emissions per head than any others in the world—Australia, USA and Canada. We need to make urgent changes to our lifestyle and business practices to combat this, in the

knowledge that the longer we leave it, the more it will cost to repair the damage. This is not to sound alarmist; I wish the scientists were wrong. We have only between 10 and 20 years to start making a difference and we are close to 'tipping point' already, even though it really is almost inconceivable to imagine.

We are already beginning to feel the increase in extreme weather events, which are so disruptive to our lives and business. The effect on ice melt at both poles is already causing raised sea levels. There are other serious effects including the increasing food shortages and the likelihood that 40 percent of the world's species could become extinct this century—giving us the biggest mass extinction event since the dinosaurs.

WHY SHOULD BUSINESS CARE?

In the present global financial situation, it is difficult for people facing credit squeeze, late payments, reduced turnover, potential staff reductions plus general gloom to take global warming and carbon emissions on board. Even when the business owner genuinely cares about the environment, they often think it is too difficult to start anything and their little bit





SO EASY TO BE GREEN TIP

Why not start by going for a 'grumpy' walk around your business once or twice every day and turn off things that are not being used.

does not matter. Feeling overwhelmed is completely understandable.

1. The real facts are that in a carbon constrained world, energy and other commodity prices are going up and this, coupled with margins and turnover going down, is a serious business problem. Going green actually helps to reduce this problem by saving both money and time. Size is no barrier to gaining real benefits from going green either. Small business can benefit just as much as the corporates.
2. On the exporting front, most developed countries are much more aware of these issues than Australians. The concepts of buying local and carbon miles are popular around the world and indeed are being used as an anti-competitive tool to block goods from countries like Australia and New Zealand. This can be unfair at times. For example, many Australian wines actually have a smaller carbon footprint than French ones because of our more efficient production

techniques. However, as exporters we need to be able to prove green credentials.

3. Reports also show that consumers increasingly patronise businesses that show they consider their effect on the environment. This is a growing market segment, which is important to note in tough economic times. All around the world people want to help the environment. Surveys show more than 50 percent of us are even prepared to pay more for environmentally friendly products and services. In fact most people (53 percent in UK, 63 percent in the USA, 45 percent in China) believe that tackling climate change will benefit the economy. Sadly, in order to tap into this market, some operators are using greenwash to promote a greener image than is accurate.

AVOID GREENWASH

To avoid greenwash accusations, certification and green ticks need to have a recognised number like ISO 14001, because without such, the claims could be regarded as simply fraudulent. Some of the product certifications are less robustly audited here than they are overseas. They only follow the guidelines of international standards instead of being more rigorous, and some green ticks can even be purchased on a website with only a questionnaire! Using images of dolphins and pandas, or words such as eco or enviro often mean very little and are intended to confuse. So make sure as a buyer, you check all claims and as a seller, make sure that your claims are certified. If in doubt, you can always double check www.accc.gov.au for the latest information.



NUMBER ONE FOR EXPORT IS ISO 14001

The only internationally recognised environmental certification is ISO 14001. In Europe, this is called EMAS and is widely recognised and frequently essential for overseas imports into the EU.

In spite of our own concept of Australia as a clean green country, this is not the perception internationally because of our tardiness to sign the Kyoto Protocol and the news of our five percent greenhouse reduction target. Coupled with the problem of carbon miles, that is, the emissions associated with our exports travelling such long distances, Australian exporters increasingly need proof of their green credentials to sell their goods into European Union markets and this means ISO 14001 certification.

You need to counter issues of carbon miles with proven efficiency to achieve more export markets. The ISO 14001 certification gives businesses the proof and recognition needed to do this. Additionally there is a range of other efficiencies available through this certification, including an effective feedback system that looks at mistakes and near mistakes as opportunities to allow the business to improve. ISO 14001 does not have to be difficult nor require a large paper trail. An effective ISO 14001 system is slimline and simple.

Rather than considering global warming as a problem to be ignored or to even be sceptical about, it is sound business practice to view it as an opportunity for business to go green, become more efficient and access a new range of markets. Going green really adds to the bottom line and builds sustainability as we move forward with both carbon and financial constraints. ☺

Jean Cannon is an Environmental Biologist and accomplished author. Her company Enviro Action provides environmental, safety and quality management systems. See www.enviroaction.com.au for more

Available online RRP \$19.95
www.itiseasytobegreen.com or 1300 883 646