

Australian Events Do It GREENER

Home-grown Australian events with a sustainable focus, like Earth Hour and Clean Up Australia Day, have enjoyed tremendous success in exporting their event to overseas audiences.

left to right - Anna Evington (Woodford Folk Festival), Gavin Pereira (Carbon Reduction Institute), Prof. Stuart White (Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS), Jyllie Jackson (Lismore Lantern Parade)

At the recent International Event Management Summit, delegates learnt that green principles can be applied to events of any scale, without blowing the budget.

When Ian Kiernan, the founder of Clean Up Australia Day, met with the United Nations in 1991 to propose a global Clean Up campaign, it was the start of big things for sustainable events in Australia. Flash forward two decades, and Australia is still leading by best (green) example, with events like Earth Hour, an event which started in Sydney in 2007 and has since engaged hundreds of millions of people in over 4000 cities around the world.

In July, Australia's reputation as a world leader in sustainable events was on show, as environmental experts and event professionals gathered in Queensland for the 5th Biannual International Event Management Summit.

Hosted by The Australian Centre for Event Management (ACEM), the summit addressed strategies for events in 'Meeting the Challenge of Sustainable Development', especially the increasing public pressure on events to address their environmental impacts.

Earth Hour and Clean Up Australia Day are both great examples of sustainable events which started in Australia, and are now leading advocates for change by encouraging environmental best-practice at the global level, said director of The Australian Centre for Event Management, Rob Harris.

"From an operational perspective, sustainability remains a major challenge for the Australian events industry and the demand for environmentally sustainable products and services has never been greater.

"While 61 per cent of event organisers have perceived an increased demand for eco-friendly products and services over the past year, only 30 per cent of the industry actually offer clients a choice between low environmental impact and regular event options," he said referring to the National Corporate Social Responsibility Audit, conducted by Business Events Australia in 2008.

At the summit, event managers heard from experts on the latest eco-friendly strategies and products on offer, which are important not only to match increasing client demand, but also in



line with the incredible responsiveness of the public to sustainable events.

In his key address, Andrew Sedger, director of communications for Earth Hour Global, looked at both the educative role of events and how green practices can be employed within them to reduce their impacts.

He argued that in order for events to be actively reducing carbon emissions, they needed to employ more innovative tools and creative strategies, including maximising their use of digital and online tools.

"Event managers need to ask themselves: What is our role and opportunity in a carbon constrained world? Do we want to embrace change and be innovators, or will we be dragged kicking and screaming?" said Sedger.

With Earth Hour for example, we've found that we can make considerable savings, both environmental and financial, by maximising our use of online platforms to engage with audiences.

"We also saved huge amounts of money, and effectively reduced carbon emissions, by experimenting with innovative uses of energy. The Earth Hour concert in Federation Square Melbourne, was entirely powered by 'pedal power', with Monash University students cycling to generate 1009 watts of energy to power the concert."

Ian Kiernan, Chairman of Clean Up Australia and Clean Up the World campaigns, took a similar tack in his keynote presentation, noting how sustainably focused events can drive environmental thinking and change the mindsets of businesses and the community.

"The lure of conference travel has lost some of its punch, as have the lavish receptions and dinners to match. Corporate Australia is feeling the pinch, financially and through the scrutiny of those who clearly want to reduce the environmental footprint of events," said Kiernan.

"There is an essential checklist for event planners today - try to offset travel by delegates, offer more strategic venue arrangements, localise your catering, look into conferencing technology or reduce the use of yesterday's products such as bottled water," he said.

"However the low hanging fruit has been picked, and the challenge for event managers today is to break through the clutter of events and make yours different. It opens up endless possibilities for innovative thinking."

The 2009 International Event Management Summit was a carbon neutral event, showcasing environmental practices and educating delegates on these. ACEM worked closely with the Carbon Reduction Institute, Slow Food advocate Alison Drover, and Ark

Climate to reduce and offset the Summit's carbon emissions.

"As a conference, we addressed our environmental impact upon the Surfer's Paradise region, with all food being sourced locally from within a 100 mile radius of the venue. We also reduced the use of consumables, such as paper, purchased green power and eliminated transport requirements using 'walking buses' between venues," said Harris.

Established at the University of Technology Sydney in 1999, ACEM is the most reputable events educator in Australia. The Centre offers a range of innovative products and services

including short courses in event management, executive programs, an annual seminar series and a biannual research conference and symposium. For more information on ACEM, visit <http://www.acem.uts.edu.au/>



Rob Harris, Director of Australian Centre for Event Management



New carbon calculator launched for the events industry

A major outcome of the summit was the launch of a brand new carbon calculator, tailored specifically to the unique needs of event producers and organisers. The free ACEM Carbon Calculator is easily accessed online, and allows event managers to measure the carbon footprint of events of all sizes, held anywhere in the world.

Developed in association with the Carbon Reduction Institute, the calculator also offers emission reduction tips to guide event managers in future

planning, such as offsetting delegate travel to conferences, or employing local producers for event catering.

"The ACEM Carbon Calculator is a free easy-to-use service we're offering to the industry, in the hope that it increases the number of event managers taking positive action to reduce the carbon footprint of the projects they're running," said Robert Harris.

"The calculator measures the unique aspects of events, such as varied use

of venue space or diversity of catering options, and also allows event managers to offset their carbon emissions through purchasing carbon credits.

"This is a key tool for event organisers, not only for creating more sustainable events, but also offering an option to develop strategies for future reference and year on year impact tracking"

The free ACEM Carbon Calculator may be accessed at <http://www.noco2.com.au/acemcarboncalculator>



we are here for growth, not for profit

Set in the picturesque Eastern Gardens, the Geelong Conference Centre is a purpose built residential conference venue, located within walking distance of Geelong's waterfront precinct. Boasting plenty of natural light, garden outlooks and providing a tranquil environment for business and social events alike.



Holding a conference doesn't have to cost the Earth

- ☑ The Centre is working towards reducing its environmental footprint
- ☑ We are committed to regenerating Eastern Park with sustainable planting
- ☑ We are a Waste Wise Accredited Venue
- ☑ Every event held at the Centre helps support The Salvation Army

