

GREENHOUSE GAS SCHEMES BENEFIT AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND COMPANIES

JAS-ANZ (Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand) launched one of the first greenhouse gas (GHG) accreditation programs in the world in mid-2008 to make it easier for businesses and consumers to recognise credible GHG claims. Westpac New Zealand talk about their experiences in being certified to a GHG scheme, and offer advice to companies that may be considering this option.



Making the most of life



Westpac New Zealand

[Westpac New Zealand](#) has been operating in New Zealand for 149 years. It has approximately 5,000 employees, 1.2 million active customers, 200 branches around the country and nine corporate sites.

Westpac New Zealand was certified to carbonZero SBU's [Certified Emissions Measurement And Reduction Scheme](#) (CEMARS®) in 2007. Since then it has been certified annually. When the organisation was recertified in 2009, it had reduced its carbon emissions by 28% over the year.

According to Suzie Marsden, Head of Sustainability, Westpac New Zealand, the decision to measure the organisation's carbon footprint was driven by the company's desire to lead sustainable practices for businesses in New Zealand. "We worked out a sustainability strategy, and a very important part of that was making sure we were minimising our environmental impact, so we wanted to do that in a way that was as robust, transparent and 'best practice' as possible," she says.

It took the Westpac team about four months to prepare for certification, most of which was spent on collecting and assessing the quality of data. "We could readily access a number of data sources, but some information that we needed and weren't capturing took us longer," Marsden says. "We had to meet with the suppliers of that data and agree what format they would use to report it."

Assessment of the data collected revealed that approximately 50% of Westpac's emissions were caused by electricity needed to heat and cool buildings for staff, and to run PCs and ATMs. Westpac's property management team, which manages electricity purchasing centrally, was actively involved in implementing CEMARS and in setting the organisation's reduction targets.

Westpac New Zealand estimates that it will save almost NZ\$4 million over three years as a direct result of reducing its carbon emissions. According to Marsden, no additional capital expenditure was needed to achieve these savings. It reduced its energy consumption by upgrading old air-conditioning units in its branches, cut back air travel by approximately 10%, is gradually upgrading its car fleet to more energy-efficient vehicles, and is reducing its paper usage.

"The benefits have been fantastic for our business," says Marsden. "The process prompted us to ask questions of ourselves and change our behaviours, not only to reduce our carbon footprint, but to save our organisation a lot of money."

The organisation has also benefitted in other unexpected ways. "Many organisations are looking to have a more sustainable supply chain," Marsden says. "When they saw what we'd achieved, it helped us to win their business."

Westpac's own internal communication has also improved. "Often in bigger organisations you may feel powerless to make a difference," Marsden says. "We've had some great examples where staff members have suggested something and we as a team have championed that suggestion. We're starting to get awesome dialogue with our staff. They see that we are listening and doing something about it."

Advice to others:



Marsden advises other organisations to persevere through the painful data collection process. "It's incredibly valuable, because one of the great benefits of putting in place mechanisms to reduce your emissions means that in 9 out of 10 cases you'll save money," Marsden says. "It's a win-win. Persevere with the pain. You don't have to do it overnight. Most businesses will intuitively know which components of their operation have the biggest environmental impact, and go after those first."

Marsden suggests that companies should enlist the help of their suppliers. "Get your suppliers on board to help you get the information you need," she says.

Suzie Marsden, Head of Sustainability, Westpac New Zealand

Organisations interested in learning more about measuring and reducing their GHG emissions

Contact a certification body accredited by JAS-ANZ for a GHG scheme – www.carbonzero.co.nz

This article is the second in a two part series focussing on accredited GHG schemes.

Read part one [Greenhouse Gas program helps businesses and consumers to recognise credible claims](#).