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Taking the initiative

This issue brings you discussion on the control of Antarctic tourism, the rise of the eco-smart office and the launch of the ground-breaking Solar Cities program. It also takes another, more comprehensive look at the central role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the evolution of our communities.

The Focus on pages 24–31 reminds us that, historically, because of their central place, companies established themselves with the firm objective of contributing directly to the community and its social maintenance. But with the development of the modern economic system, and the high stakes linked to a focus on profitability and shareholder returns, it is frequently observed that we have seen a practical deprioritisation of those initial, noble objectives.

While factoring in responsibility for the environment wasn't a commonplace mandate for those early corporations, increasing understanding that environmental factors are fundamentally linked to economic integrity means more organisations are now viewing investment in environmental priorities as central to viability.

Ironically, both responsible governance and social responsibility are coupled to environmental responsibility, hence the centrality of the 'triple bottom line' concept to any thinking these days on company direction. A commitment to doing good also means doing well.

However, as was echoed during the announcement of the latest Corporate Responsibility Index winners at the 2006 Business Leaders Forum on Sustainability in May, despite more standout examples every year, Australian companies are still conspicuously behind competitors in Europe and America in their CSR efforts.



We explore why that is, and then get some insight into CSR progress in the white-hot resources sector from Paul Mitchell, the Australian who is heading the International

Council on Mining and Metals that has initiated significant sector leadership on sustainable development.

It is also notable that CSR practice in Australia has recently been examined in detail by a Parliamentary inquiry (page 4) after concerns about the commitment of companies to their wider stakeholders.

Finally, we're pleased to report some recent awards successes: *Ecos* has been nominated as a media category finalist in the 2006 national Banksia Environmental Foundation Awards, and received a Highly Commended 'Top 25' Award from the US-based Trade Association Business Publications International, which runs the annual 'Tabbies'. Your readership and support of the magazine has contributed to that success – thank you.

James Porteous
Managing Editor



Australian Landscape Trust

Next, in issue 132

In the August–September issue, Steve Davidson researches the brace of inspiring community-level sustainability initiatives happening across the country. A second Focus looks at the power of financial institutions to effect significant shifts in sustainable development, and a report from South-East Asia discusses the effects of rapidly expanding oil palm plantations.