

In Brief

Freight company on track to slow emissions



The emissions reduction strategy involved informing drivers about how to increase vehicle fuel efficiency. istockphoto.com

Sydney-based Power Docs & Freight claims it has become Australia's first carbon-neutral freight company, after having undergone a carbon audit in 2008 that resulted in a plan to neutralise its carbon footprint.

The company has installed energy-efficient lighting in its offices, purchased Green Power electricity, informed drivers about how to increase fuel efficiency, set standards for future low-emissions vehicle purchases such as hybrids, and offset the balance of its emissions through purchasing carbon offsets.

According to a 2008 report by the Total Environment Centre, the transport sector is one of the nation's fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions, with the growth rate from freight transport rising faster than the growth rate from personal car use.

While total transport emissions grew by 27.4 per cent between 1990 and 2006, emissions from freight transport grew by almost 40 per cent over the same period.

Save water, save energy: message to cities

A new report by CSIRO and the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) – 'Energy use in the provision and consumption of urban water in Australia and New Zealand' – shows a strong nexus between water and energy.

'Ensuring a reliable water supply for our cities will require more energy due to increasing populations and the trend to develop new, more energy-intensive water sources like desalination plants, reuse facilities and more distant sources,' says CSIRO scientist Steven Kenway.

'However, the provision of urban water services uses relatively little energy compared to heating water for residential and non-residential purposes. A 15 per cent reduction in residential hot water use could offset all energy used by water utilities in 2006/07.

'Saving hot water represents

a real win-win-win: it cuts energy and water use for consumers, reduces energy demand for utilities, and helps households and utilities save money on energy and water bills.'

The researchers considered three water consumption scenarios for 2030, ranging from 150 to 300 litres per person per day for residential water use, based on a projected population of 15.8 million for Australia's major cities.

'Under Australia's current average consumption, which is 217 litres per person per day, total energy use to provide water could increase by up to 130 per cent above 2006/07 use, if a mix of desalination, recycling and new surface water sources is used to meet the expected demand,' adds Kenway.

'Even with this increase, urban water utilities would only



More efficient use of water could help Australian cities reduce their energy consumption. CSIRO

account for 0.3 per cent of the total energy used by Australia's major cities in 2030.'

WSAA Executive Director, Ross Young, says the scenarios reinforce the need for the water industry to continue implementing energy-saving initiatives and planning water resources with a clear understanding of where energy and water savings can be made most effectively – for example, replacement of inefficient shower-heads and appliances in households.

Atlas overlays biodiversity and carbon-sink hotspots

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has created a carbon sink/biodiversity demonstration atlas showing how the world's forests – natural carbon sinks – overlap biodiversity 'hotspots'.

With almost 20 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions resulting from deforestation, UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, says that by pinpointing where high densities of carbon overlap with high levels of biodiversity, 'the atlas spotlights where governments and investors can deal with two crises for the price of one'.

'This does not include the other benefits from investing in forest ecosystem "infrastructure" from stabilising soils to conserving and boosting local and regional water supplies.'

UNEP is testing the 'multiple



Conserving carbon locked up in forests also conserves biodiversity in carbon- and species-rich places like Borneo. istockphoto.com/FM Osman

benefits' effect of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) programs in Central Africa and South-East Asia. For example, its experts are studying how

investment in conserving carbon in forests on the Nigerian-Cameroon border may also assist in conserving the habitat of the highly endangered Cross River gorilla.