



Greening Communities

Helping not-for-profit groups build
sustainable communities

a white paper by Church Resources

What is Greening Communities?

Established in 2008, Greening Communities is a program run by Church Resources that assists not-for-profit and church groups to contribute in practical ways to ecological sustainability – what we like to call ‘stepping lightly on the Earth’.

The program was launched after our member groups highlighted the challenges they faced trying to source environmental products that help reduce greenhouse gases and consume energy and water more efficiently. In particular, it aimed to address the need for accurate information and affordable, environment-friendly goods and services.

Through collaboration and partnership, the Greening Communities program seeks to assist more than 18,000 members from the not-for-profit community to develop, implement and maintain a sustainability plan. Underpinning this is a simple four-step process we advise our member organisations to follow.

Furthermore, we continually strive to bring together not-for-profit organisations and commercial enterprise for the common good. In doing so, Greening Communities provides vital knowledge, practical tools and, through our buying power, access to a broad range of well-priced eco-products and services to our members.

What is ecological sustainability?

Ecological sustainable development, while not easily defined, is nevertheless vitally important to the health and wellbeing of not only the planet but also future generations.

While we must meet the needs of the present, it is the responsibility of the current generation not to compromise the ability of future generations to provide for their needs.

We must take steps to use wisely, conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance the community’s resources, so that the ecological processes supporting all life are maintained.

It is understandable that we may feel overawed by the responsibility. It can be appreciated, too, that we feel hampered by too few resources and insufficient time to meet the challenges of contributing to ecological sustainability; that we feel prevented from doing our bit.

As we become a carbon-constrained economy facing rising energy and water costs, the not-for-profit sector will be forced to do more with less. It becomes important for organisations such as Church Resources and the Greening Communities program to propose



effective solutions and provide the necessary knowledge, resources, tools, products and support.

Not only can church and not-for-profit groups begin to make an invaluable contribution to ecological sustainable development, they also save time, money and effort, which in turn enables organisations to provide improved services to their customers.

When the common good is at stake, everyone has a role to play and something to gain.

What can you do?

Under the Greening Communities program, Church Resources has built a framework that outlines four simple steps that member organisations need to take.

By progressing through each stage, you can develop a commitment to ecological sustainability. Moreover, you can access tools to build a sustainability plan and affordable eco-products and services through partnerships with third-party suppliers.

Four steps to a greener community



→ 1. Audit

To tread lightly on the Earth, you must first understand your organisation’s ecological footprint.

Although there are many approaches to measuring our ecological footprint, it is generally calculated by looking at the impact our energy demands have on the Earth’s natural resources. The more actively we consume these resources, the larger our footprint. At the moment, the scales are tipped against our ecosystems. We are consuming resources at a faster rate than it takes for them to renew and we are causing considerable damage to ecosystems in the process.

By understanding your footprint, you can take a step towards developing a plan for changing the way your organisation uses and reuses resources.

→ 2. Plan

The next step is ensuring that your organisation as a whole supports the development of a sustainability plan, with suitable levels of support from management and staff. This requires setting goals and making specific plans to achieve them.



→ 3. Reduce

Ecological sustainability must go beyond simply outlining the steps that your organisation plans to take. If a plan is to achieve its objectives, your people must take real action.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle is both the environment movement's mantra and call to action. Reduce consumption by installing more water and energy-efficient products. Reuse what you can, don't automatically throw something away but think whether someone else can make use of it. Recycle material that can be made into something new.

→ 4. Review

Reviewing progress against the plan is essential. Continue to ask questions to see what else might be possible. Review the plan and restart.

What we can do

Through the Greening Communities program, Church Resources provides church and not-for-profit organisations with support and direction in developing, implementing and maintaining a sustainability plan.

We also provide information and tools that help improve the environmental outcomes of any plan.

In addition, through collaboration and partnership Greening Communities will:

- Leverage the buying power of our members to make available quality environmental products at a discounted price
- Promote open channels of communication and sharing of initiatives to encourage and inspire other not-for-profit organisations to participate
- Procure and harness important skills and expertise through the involvement of other leading organisations.

What we can offer

Church Resources strives to partner with reputable companies and build trusting relationships, delivering high-value, competitively priced products and services to our members.

Our members have access to eco-product consultancy through our partner Eco Community. They can also purchase a wide range of environmentally friendly products from our existing suppliers.

Eco-product consultancy

As a part of the Greening Communities program, members can talk to independent eco-product assessors who will assist organisations to decide on the most appropriate approach and eco-products for them.

The independent assessors provided by Eco Community can:

- Assess and advise on which products and solutions are best suited to members' needs
- Identify government rebates for which members may be eligible and assist with the application process
- Recommend the most appropriate suppliers to members
- Facilitate the installation of selected products and services by preferred suppliers.

Your sustainability resources

Greening Communities provides access to resources that aim to further assist not-for-profit groups through each of the stages.

This includes hot links to third-party organisations and programs, such as Catholic Earthcare Australia and the Sustainable Schools program, and information about environmental products.

Through Eco Community, Church Resources has sourced a full range of quality products for water conservation and reuse, power and hot water from solar sources, and more efficient use of traditional energy sources.

Other environmental products

Church Resources has a collective purchasing program that allows our members to purchase a wide range of environmentally friendly products and services.

We have chosen preferred suppliers who understand the needs of our members and guarantee value and quality service. As a result, our members – particularly small and regional organisations – can save time, money and effort. They can gain efficiencies, harness the power of the collective group and, importantly, spend more time and resources on their core business.

Members can choose from:

- A diverse range of discounted products and services, including flooring, information and communication technology (ICT), aged care supplies and environmental products
- A range of complete solutions in telecommunications, recruitment, travel, office supplies and vehicles.

Eco Community

In October 2007, Church Resources contracted Eco Community to help our members, across each of our key sectors, source the most appropriate environmental products to fulfil their sustainability goals.

Eco Community was selected because of its expertise and experience in selecting and installing eco-friendly products and for its after-sales service.

In addition, Eco Community demonstrated a commitment to carbon neutrality, shared values and an approach to the environment common to both Church Resources and our members.

Primarily, Eco Community differentiates itself by:

- Carefully assessing the eco-product market and selecting the best providers of environmental products at the most competitive prices
- Providing a complete end-to-end service for all products required by an organisation.



Many of our existing suppliers source and sell environmentally friendly or 'green' products within their product category, such as stationery, travel, vehicle fleets and information technology.

While factors vary for each product category, criteria used by suppliers to determine the 'green credentials' of a product or service can range from recycled content, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, and water and energy savings to toxicity levels, greenhouse gas emissions and labour practices.

More information about these products is available from Church Resources.

Why you should get involved

Membership to Church Resources is free and open to any church or not-for-profit group. We have more than 18,000 members across church groups and the health, aged care, education and welfare sectors.

By taking part in the Greening Communities program, organisations can:

- Save time, money and effort in purchasing a wide range of eco products and services
- Leverage the buying power, expertise and knowledge of the wider church and not-for-profit sector for the benefit of everyone, especially smaller, regional organisations
- Network and collaborate with other member organisations to make improvements that benefit both their clients and the community.

How you can participate

If you are a church or not-for-profit organisation wanting to get involved, visit our website (www.churchresources.com.au) to:

- Join the Church Resources community
- Read more about Greening Communities
- Record your areas of interest on the Greening Communities Demand Register.

Frequently asked questions

Visit www.churchresources.com.au to view answers to frequently asked questions.

About Church Resources

Church Resources is a charitable trust established by the Catholic Church to help church groups and the not-for-profit community work collectively for the common good.

Today, we have broadened our initial focus on Catholic institutions to include Jewish, Lutheran, Uniting, Anglican and other Church and not-for-profit organisations. Our members span several important community sectors in both metropolitan and regional areas, including health, aged care, education, welfare and parishes.

In our work, we facilitate collaboration and communication between commercial and not-for-profit sectors. We build partnerships with some of Australia's leading organisations and provide a range of business consultation services.

We harness the buying power, expertise and knowledge of the Church and not-for-profit community, and source third-party products and services and negotiate discounts.

We publish online prayers and weekly news for thousands of subscribers, which keep our members informed and up to date on the work Church Resources does.

Greening Communities is a key program incorporated into a wider strategy that provides business advice, key products and services and networking opportunities to our members.

For more information about Greening Communities, visit www.churchresources.com.au, or contact Church Resources at greeningcommunities@churchresources.com.au or 1300 CHURCH (1300 248 724).



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