

Pitch In To Cut CO₂

With road transport such as cars, trucks and buses pumping out 72 MMT of greenhouse gases a year in Australia alone, businesses and individuals are being encouraged to offset the damage their vehicles cause under a new environmental conservation program.

The Carbon Neutral Program is aimed at offsetting the amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere by having vehicle owners subsidise the planting of the necessary number of trees needed to soak up the equivalent amount of CO₂ emissions.

The program is being run by WA-based environmental group, Men of the Trees (MOTT), which is a voluntary, non profit organisation that has planted more than 6 million trees throughout WA alone since the state branch was established in 1978.

Men of the Trees President, Barrie Oldfield, said the Carbon Neutral Program was specifically targeting fleet owners who want to set a good example.

As part of the program, MOTT calculates how many trees are required based on a formula that considers fuel type, engine size and kilometres travelled each year, along with figures from the Australian Greenhouse Office's Fuel Consumption Guide. The office has calculated that an average litre of petrol releases 2.3 kg of CO₂ through the exhaust.

A carbon neutral calculator supplied on the MOTT website (www.menofthetrees.com.au) provides the opportunity to see how specific vehicles impact on the environment. The

calculator reveals that a petrol fuelled Ford Falcon that travels 400 km/week requires 21 trees to offset its annual CO₂ production.

MOTT is encouraging both private cars and company vehicles to be registered under the campaign, as an economical and efficient means of managing greenhouse emissions. The trees, which are predominantly planted in regional areas, not only help control the amount of CO₂ in the air, but also help fight salinity and land degradation problems common in WA.

Jasmine Geddes, Carbon Neutral Manager – Operations, said the campaign had attracted a great response from WA businesses and the general public alike. "We have been approached by a variety of companies for details on registering their business fleet and are also working with the state government on how to construct a carbon neutral office building or home", Geddes said.

The McNerney Ford dealership is also working with MOTT to get the motor trade involved in the campaign and will soon be offering carbon neutral memberships with cars sold through their caryard.

Managing Director, Denis McNerney, first heard about the programme through his involvement with MOTT and helped launch the campaign with the belief that it is good business.



"In WA our biggest problem is how to manage our natural resources and land properly. Our aim is to get as 'green' as possible while still remaining economically viable", McNerney said, adding that most people in business tend to discount the efforts of the green movement.

Geddes said MOTT hoped to use the campaign to build a strong relationship with the petroleum industry, especially the makers of oil and gas products. "People have a very negative opinion of the energy industry. The industry itself and the people within it are now realising it needs to be sustainable. Carbon Neutral allows these individuals and corporations to make their commitment to sustainability a more public issue. What better way to do this than to partner with an organisation like Men of the Trees, which has been committed to planting trees, working against salinity and promoting sustainable living in WA for more than 20 years."