

Metago Environmental Engineers (Australia) Pty Ltd

Integrating specialist engineering, scientific, social, financial and legal skills for sustainability.

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The Sustainable Production



Welcome

The aim of this newsletter is to update our current and potential clients with trends, summaries and comments as our Australian society moves further towards sustainable development. We hope you find the contents of this newsletter useful. If you have any questions, or do not want to receive the newsletter please [e-mail: tiffany@metago.com.au](mailto:tiffany@metago.com.au).

Gillard's Strategy to Introduce Carbon Price

The Federal Government aims to legislate for a price on carbon late next year and have a scheme operating well before the next election in a bid to lessen the impact of a predicted fear campaign. The strategy is based on the assumption that if a carbon price is introduced and allowed to operate for a while, people will realise it is not the monster opponents are making it out to be. The approach is based on John Howard's introduction of the GST in 2000, amid a scare campaign. By the time of the election more than a year later, the public had grown used to it and there was little desire to revoke it. [More info at: www.smh.com.au](http://www.smh.com.au)

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HR and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

For a long time the CSR agenda for organisations has mostly fallen on the desk of environmental professionals, but there is significant synergy between Human Resources and CSR and to deserve enquiry. Elaine Cohen, in her new book on the subject, suggests that HR can assist businesses in addressing their social responsibility through:

- Business strategy and risk;
- Training effectiveness;
- Career development;
- Recruitment process;
- Flexible workplace;
- Corporate culture and ethics; and
- Internal communication.

Cohen states that CSR minus HR is only PR and that its time HR moved from managing

impacts ON employees to impacts OF employees. She defines CSR as:

"business that is based on ethical principles and structured management controls, and that takes into account social and environmental considerations alongside economic considerations."

This is different to sustainability which she says is more external to business strategy: " CSR is about the way a company does business. Sustainability is more about the collaboration to address world issues which may affect society over the long term. Businesses can do CSR on their own, but they will tend to do sustainability in partnership".

More at: www.greenleaf-publishing.com/productdetail

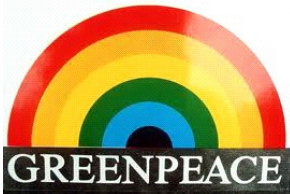
Disaster in Hungary as a Second Torrent Threatens



Four people died on October 4th when a dam wall burst, releasing about 700,000 cubic metres of red mud from an aluminium plant reservoir about 160 kilometres south-west of Budapest, Hungary. A further four people have died as the flood spread across 40 km² of fields and villages and finally into the Danube River. Officials say it is Hungary's worst-ever chemical accident, the red sludge was reported to have burned people through their clothes due to the high pH. Since the initial disaster, a second torrent threatens as a crack in the reservoir widens. The investigation is looking into possible criminal negligence among workers at the plant and the CEO has been detained. The company which owns the reservoir, the Hungarian Aluminium Production and Trade Company (MAL), said that the red sludge, was not in fact hazardous by European standards, however, it would foot the costs of the funerals. Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, said "We have good reason to suspect that there were some who were aware of the weakened state of the reservoir wall and chose to do nothing. More information at: www.abc.net.au/news/stories and www.bloomberg.com



more give, less take



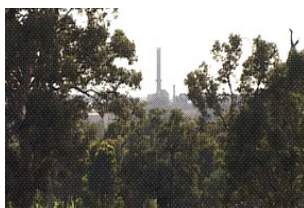
The Big Banks, Sustainability and Greenpeace

The Australian banking sector's experience with CSR and sustainability over the past decade is a work-in-progress. Over most of the past decade the early mover on sustainability in the Australian banking sector was Westpac. However, the National Australia Bank (NAB) has just announced success in its three-year quest to become the first carbon-neutral bank among Australia's big four. NAB has now delivered its carbon neutral target on time as a 'hard' business target with strong buy-in from its Group CEO, Cameron Clyne; major engagement of its staff; direct business outputs in terms of lasting efficiencies with good returns on investment; and a new carbon trading team provides specialist sourcing of offsets for NAB and its customers. More information available [at www.environmentalmanagementnews.net](http://www.environmentalmanagementnews.net)

The competition is fierce as accountability and transparency are becoming even more crucial following the Global Financial Crisis. According to the Global Responsible Investment Network, Westpac is still considered Australia's most sustainable company at number 15 on the Global 100 list in 2010. More information [from www.global100.org](http://www.global100.org).

While the global banking sector leader is the ANZ according to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index. The DJSI World comprises more than 300 companies that represent the top 10% of the leading sustainability companies out of the biggest 2500 companies in the Dow Jones Global Total Stock Market Index. [More information at www.sustainability-index.com](http://www.sustainability-index.com)

But Greenpeace is not happy: it says the big four banks financed more than \$5 billion worth of coal projects in the past five years while promoting their green credentials. The ANZ, NAB, Commonwealth and Westpac loaned more than 6 times the amount of money to coal mining, power stations and exporting than to renewable energy projects. Greenpeace says the banks have the power to make the green image they promote a reality - but won't do that until they shift investment to green energy. They need to put their money where their mouth is and not lock future generations into this dirty form of power. [More info at: news.theage.com.au](http://news.theage.com.au)



Alcoa Fined, Residents Not Happy

Alcoa was fined \$45,000 in September after dust from its bauxite refinery in WA's South West blew into the nearby town of Yarloop. The company was originally charged with criminal negligence causing pollution (which carries a \$1 million fine) over the incident which happened in May 2006, but that charge was downgraded. Alcoa pleaded guilty to breaching the conditions of its licence. The maximum penalty for the offence is \$125,000, the Magistrate said consideration needed to be given to deterrence because Alcoa had a record of contravening the Environmental Protection Act, however she took the guilty plea into account.

Outside the court, a local resident said the decision was a slap in the face. She believes the dust has caused her medical problems and another resident said the penalty was pathetic. The residents are continuing legal action, headed by the environmental campaigner Erin Brockovich, in the United States. Resident Vince Puccio says "Our ultimate aim is to get accountability and to get Alcoa to take responsibility for what they've done to the town, to the people." More information [from: www.abc.net.au/news/stories](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories)

Solar Panels on the White House Again

U.S President Barack Obama has agreed to put new solar panels on the White House again. In June next year the White House roof will get an estimated 20 to 50 panels that convert light into power. The systems, which will be put on top of the Obama family's living quarters, will generate more than double the amount of electricity used by the average home in Washington, should save about \$3,000 a year in electricity bills.

Former President Jimmy Carter was the first to put solar panels on the White House in 1979, during an oil crisis spurred by strife in oil producer Iran. Ronald Reagan, his successor, then had the solar panels removed during repairs. Although, in 2003 former President George W. Bush put panels on a maintenance shed to generate power for the grounds and solar equipment to help heat the swimming pool and cabana.

More information available from: <http://planetark.org/wen/59761>

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