

## The Down Under Tours Group

The Down Under Tours Group of companies has made a firm commitment to environmental sustainability and over the past two years the Tour Group has received staff and company environmental accreditation under numerous programs. As a transport and transport logistics supplier, they have installed leading edge technology into their fleet to help monitor and reduce their carbon footprint. The initiatives at Down Under Tours have led to reduced operating costs as vehicles last longer and require maintenance and repair less frequently.

### GETTING STARTED

The Down Under Tours Group began on their pathway to sustainability in early 2007 with the goal of reducing their carbon footprint and operating costs. The first step in the process was to hire a private consultant to measure their carbon footprint. The results of the audit were positive and provided key next steps for the operation in improving their sustainability and reducing their impact on the natural environment.



### MAJOR INITIATIVES

The implementation of a coach management system is a key initiative of the Group. The system was implemented not only to reduce fuel consumption, but also to prolong the life of the vehicles and create a better experience for the passengers. By recording different signals, the system can record driving events such as heavy acceleration, heavy breaking and idling time which all impact on fuel consumption and the company's carbon footprint.

In addition, the team at Down Under Tours have implemented numerous other initiatives in the office to target other problem areas such as paper use, energy use and waste. For example, the company was using extensive amounts of paper and so purchased new office printers that would allow paper use to be tracked by user. Employees worked by the slogan "think before you print, and then think again" and were made accountable for their printing. Paper use became a company KPI and there has since been a heavy reduction of paper use across the company.

### KEY OUTCOMES

For their efforts, Down Under Tours has received certification and recognition under numerous programs, including:

- Ecotourism Eco-certification
- The Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard

- 🌱 Planet Safe Partnership
- 🌱 Australian Rainforest Foundation
- 🌱 The Australia Refrigeration Council

Presence of the coach management system has also led to reduced costs for Down Under Tours as vehicles last longer and require maintenance and repair less frequently.

### MAJOR CHALLENGES

Despite their success, reducing their carbon footprint has provided some challenges for the Down Under Tours' Cairns office:

- 🌱 The tropical climate of North Queensland and service expectations of their customers has required drivers to evenly balance the needs of their clients, notably for air conditioned comfortable vehicles, with their responsibility to the environment.
- 🌱 The implementation of the coach management system has involved large investment both in time and capital.

### ADVICE TO OTHER OPERATORS

James Dixon, Director of Down Under Tours, believes that "... as an operator, you are an educator". He stresses the importance of taking small steps and thoroughly assessing operations before making any decisions. His advice to operators is simple... "Don't ignore what is happening around you, and certainly don't think you can't make a difference".

### NEXT STEPS

Next up for the Down Under Tours Cairns office is another independent audit to assess the carbon footprint of the operation. While the outcome is expected to be positive, the audit will highlight those areas of the operation where further action can be taken on the pathway to sustainability.

### A FINAL WORD FROM THE OPERATOR...

*"We live and work in an environment where nature is our resource; we make a living from it – so we need to ensure we do the right thing by it"*

James Dixon  
Director, Down Under Tours