

VOLUNTARY CARBON OFFSETTING



EARTHCHECK

OVERVIEW: CARBON OFFSETTING

Some travel and tourism operators who have reduced their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as much as possible through energy efficiencies are looking into purchasing voluntary carbon offsets to further reduce their footprint. Carbon offsetting is a way of investing in off-site emission reduction projects that counteract your business's remaining GHG emissions whilst providing funds to implement these projects.

EarthCheck has created a list of steps your business should take before you decide which carbon offsets to purchase. Accompanying this is a series of fact sheets that provide more information relating to each step.

The Total Environment Centre, Choice and the Institute of Sustainable Futures have also ranked 20 carbon offset providers.

For more information and the questions you should ask of providers and projects, view the ***STEP4: Evaluate carbon offset providers and projects*** fact sheet.

STEP 5: UNDERSTAND CARBON OFFSET STANDARDS

The carbon offset market has grown rapidly over the past few years. The easiest way to have confidence in an offset provider or project is to use one that meets a recognised international or national accreditation standard.

For more information view the ***STEP 5: Understand carbon offset standards*** fact sheet.

STEP 1: REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS

Carbon offsetting is a relatively simple and socially responsible way for businesses to compensate for all or some of their GHG they emit. However it is essential that businesses only offset those emissions that are unavoidable. You should first look for opportunities to avoid or reduce emissions before considering carbon offsets. This will ensure your financial investment and the environmental benefits are maximised.

For more information view the ***STEP 1 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions*** fact sheet.

STEP 2: CALCULATE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact your business's activities are having on the environment in terms of the amount of GHG produced. There are many online carbon calculators available, including the EarthCheck ones that have been specifically designed for use by travel and tourism operators and are consistent with international standards for GHG accounting methodologies. These can help your business calculate your annual GHG emissions and assess your progress towards achieving best practice.

For more information view the ***STEP 2: Estimate your carbon footprint*** fact sheet.

STEP 3: SELECT THE TYPE OF CARBON OFFSET PROJECT

In Australia, carbon offsets projects can be broadly categorised into five main types:

1. Renewable energy,
2. Energy efficiency,
3. Forestry or bio-sequestration,
4. Methane projects, and
5. Waste diversion projects.

You should consider which type of offset project is the most suitable to your business's carbon strategy before investing in carbon offsets.

For more information view the ***STEP3: Select types of carbon offset*** fact sheet.

STEP 4: EVALUATE THE OFFSET PROVIDER AND THE PROJECT

As the carbon offset market in Australia is unregulated it is important that you ensure the projects your business invests in will deliver the emissions reductions claimed. Make sure you know the right questions to ask so you can confidentially evaluate carbon offset providers and projects before purchasing offsets.

EPA Victoria and Global Sustainability at RMIT have produced an online guide of Australian carbon offset providers. The guide provides up to date information on the type of projects, the cost, location and the level of accreditation. For more information visit www.carbonoffsetguide.com.au.