

Audit shows greener ways spur business gains

By DAVID RYAN, Executive Consultant to the ASI

Commitment to the ASI's Environmental Sustainability Charter (ESC) continues to spur our steel fabricators to find real ways to lighten their environmental footprints whilst lowering costs to their businesses, it has emerged from the latest annual audit of the program, recently completed.

Whether it's about lowering energy consumption, reducing wastage or lifting efficiencies around the workshop, the range of projects being undertaken by the 38 committed Charter members clearly demonstrate that good environmental practice is also good business practice. This is where environmental sustainability equates to business sustainability.

The ASI requires ESC Members to commit to operating in sustainable ways that work towards:

1. Developing and promoting steel as an environmentally sustainable form of construction.
2. Contributing to optimise the eco-efficiency in steel manufacturing, processing, treatment and construction throughout the full product life cycle.
3. Embracing the 'holy trinity' to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to minimise impacts on resources and improve energy usage in steel manufacturing, processing, treatment and construction.
4. Continuing to build an environmental awareness and share this knowledge with suppliers and subcontractors to encourage the full supply chain to embrace and implement sustainable policies.
5. Engaging with the local community on environmental issues as appropriate.

There's a myriad of ways that combined can really take a huge load from operations as some member are demonstrating.

In Victoria, GFC Industries has 10 environmental projects in play from waste reduction to energy savings whilst Stilcon Engineering is undertaking seven substantial waste and energy reduction projects. Structural Challenge is well advanced with eight environmental projects ranging from a spill kit, solar panels, reducing wastage of steel and oils, improved environmental paint disposal and donating waste steel to local TAFE for technical classes.

It may just mean taking the simple step of converting to LED lighting as Advanced Steel Fabrications, ATW Group, Aus Iron Industries, Cays Engineering and Dunsteel are all doing that significantly cuts their power bills.

As well as changing to lower-energy inverter welders in the workshop, Dunsteel along with Nepean Engineering & Innovation and Advanced Steel is also investing in solar power to lower metered energy usage from the grid. The ATW Group offsets lighting with clear sheeting roof panels to reduce greenhouse emissions and costs.

There is also significant effort being invested by Members into undertaking waste reduction measures.

In NSW, Ace Construction is busy improving its recycling techniques to minimise solid waste and Algon Steel maintains a company-wide waste tracking system. HF Hand has introduced a steel shot blast system to increase efficiency and reduce waste. In Queensland, Beenleigh Steel Fabrications is working to reduce material and printing waste and CASA Engineering is reducing its industrial gas wastage. In Victoria, Kiewa Valley Engineering's waste reduction project is well underway, Melbourne Facades is reducing wastage going to landfill or recyclers and Plinius Engineering is reducing its waste going to landfills whilst cutting costs for rubbish removal. Samaras Engineering in South Australia is reducing its steel use through more efficient design.

The Environmental Sustainability Charter Group is made up of steel industry companies who have committed themselves to the ESC program.

The ASI worked with the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) to revise the Steel Credit available under the Green Star building rating system. There is a credit point available for builders to claim against their Green Star tally for the use of fabricators who are members of the ASI's ESC group.

The objective of the ESC is to develop steel as a sustainable form of construction in terms of environmental responsibility. The ASI accords four levels of status under the Charter (Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum), the status achieved depending on the progression through the scheme following external audit.

ESC member companies that agree to be bound by the Charter make a formal declaration of their commitment to a set of sustainable principles and are assessed and monitored against a range of environmental requirements as set out in the online environmental management system.

All enquiries relating to the ASI's Environmental Sustainability Charter should be directed to **Margrit Colenbrander** in the first instance.

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