

Emissions Offsetting

Once all means of avoiding and reducing your energy use have been implemented and you have substituted high energy emitting sources with more efficient options, consideration can then be given to offsetting your events emissions through purchasing carbon credits.

There are a variety of ways to offset emissions. Consideration should be given to employing means of emissions offsets that are most befitting the type, size and content of the event you are producing.

Another very important thing to consider is the fact that *you don't have to purchase carbon offsets*. In fact, some would argue that you shouldn't purchase them at all. Although carbon offsets do have their benefits, in some cases, investment in energy & water efficiency is a far better policy that will continue to reap savings financially and environmentally for longer than a one off purchase of offsets. It's up to you to decide what's best for your event.

Your events' 'carbon-footprint':

There are a number of factors that you need to take into consideration when calculating the carbon emissions associated with your event. Different events have different objectives, sites, operations, policies, funding and expertise. Given this, event emission offset approaches vary greatly depending on the combination of these factors.

One of the primary decisions you need to make in offsetting the emissions of your event is in defining the extent of your event. This involves thinking about the activities that you consider to be a result of your event that involve greenhouse gas generation. Once you have considered this, you can then calculate the emissions associated with these activities and purchase an appropriate amount of carbon credits to offset these emissions.

'Greenpower':

The easiest and simplest way to offset the majority of emissions for events that predominantly use grid connected electricity (as almost all standard buildings do) is to ensure the power generated to supply your event is generated from renewable sources. This simply means you pay a premium for the energy for your event to have it sourced from renewable energy (such as solar or wind) instead of from carbon intensive sources such as brown coal (where the majority of energy in Victoria is sourced from). This is done through purchasing 'Greenpower' from your electricity retailer. For more information about 'Greenpower' and the options available for its purchase see: www.greenpower.com.au . Your energy provider can also help you with the information you need to calculate and offset these emissions.

Carbon Offsets

There are carbon emissions associated with events that cannot be avoided. We often use things such as generators for stages & stalls, fuels for transport (both for organisers & the public travelling to and from the event) and gas for things such as cooking & heating. Once all means of limiting emission associated with these activities have been implemented, there may still be a need to purchase 'carbon offsets' or 'carbon credits' to account for these emissions if you intend to become a carbon neutral event.

If you want your event to be carbon neutral, you can purchase 'carbon credits' that have been created through energy saved via other means, such as through the production of renewable energy or tree planting, to make up for the carbon you have emitted through your event. This is called carbon offsetting because you are offsetting the emissions you emit through your event by buying the credit created by somebody else saving carbon emissions.

There are many vagaries around carbon offsetting. There are differences in emissions calculation techniques. Some forms of offsetting such as tree planting are difficult to measure (because different tree species, climate, weather and fire can alter the carbon uptake of trees planted for offsets). It can also be hard to accurately calculate what exactly your emission may be for a given activity.

There are also arguments against carbon offsets because they remove responsibility for climate change inducing behaviour. It is felt by some that they allow people to buy absolution for contributing to global warming. That is, some people feel that offsets can give people the impression that they can behave in a way that contributes to global warming and simply feel that buying credits makes that unsustainable behaviour acceptable. This is not the case. There is only a finite amount of energy we can offset. We can't all just buy offsets to neutralise the carbon associated with everything we do. We have to reduce our energy use as much as possible before we offset the emissions that can't be avoided through any other way.

Different Approaches for Different Events:

Some events that are larger in scale and run by organisations that really want to create, enhance or maintain a reputation as being a leader may implement a complex emissions strategy. Others may simply offset a small amount of estimated carbon emissions to contribute their small part to fighting climate change, educate the public or make a statement about their values. Wherever your event may stand, there are many offset options to consider.