

Chapter 24

An Australian Rules Football Club Approach to Green ICT

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the Green ICT approach of an Australian Rules football club. In the role of their IT Manager, I had the opportunity to undertake formal training and then formulate an approach to uplifting the club's environmental credentials. This chapter is all about understanding the ICT equipment's contribution to the overall emissions of the respective clubs and the industry as a whole. As a case study, this chapter starts with how the football industry is addressing the efforts to reduce carbon emissions, considers the potential for IT to be a low-carbon enabler and then applies it to a specific football club.

INTRODUCTION

Australian Rules football is a multi-million dollar spectator sport industry administered by the Australian Football League (AFL - <http://www.afl.com.au>) and at a national league level, is comprised of 16 football clubs. Being high profile organizations, the AFL and its league clubs are constantly scrutinised by the media for their moral and social responsibilities towards their respective communities. Promoting the awareness of the effects of global warming and climate change is one such responsibility that the AFL and its league clubs

have begun to undertake in their current practices and community programs. As an industry however it may be found lagging in the area of Green ICT adoption and practices although there is indication of at least one league club – the Carlton Football Club (<http://www.carltonfc.com.au>) – leading the way in this field.

BACKGROUND

Global warming and climate change associated with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has been one of the most widely discussed subjects in Australia in particular and globally otherwise.

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Therefore, it is no wonder then that a multi-million dollar sport industries like the Australian Football League and its high profile clubs are promoting the awareness of climate change and its effects into some of their practices and community programs.

In 2006, the AFL, together with ten clubs and Origin Energy Australia (<http://www.originenergy.com.au>) partnered to organise the 'Go Green for Footy' program. By the end of 2009, this program is expected to have offset a total of approximately 90,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions generated from AFL House, the Pre-season competition, Home & Away Season and Finals Series matches.¹

This case study looks into how the industry is addressing the effort of reducing carbon emissions, considering the potential for IT to be a low-carbon enabler and a club's approach to Green ICT.

THE STATE OF GREEN ICT

A Green ICT Audit undertaken by the Australian Computer Society (ACS) in August 2007 found that the amount of carbon emissions attributable to ICT usage by Australian businesses was approximately 8 million tonnes CO₂ per annum, or 1.54% of the total emissions from total energy consumed². While ICT's contribution to annual emissions might appear minute, the audit concluded that it still represents an opportunity for ICT to contribute to overall reduction schemes. It recognises the potential for ICT to be a low-carbon enabler.

The Climate Group on behalf of the Global eSustainability Initiative reached a similar conclusion in their Smart 2020 Report which states, *'The ICT sector has both a profitable opportunity and a critical role to play with other sectors to design and deploy solutions needed to create a low carbon society'*.³

Fujitsu Australia, in a report on 'Green ICT: The State of the Nation', mentioned that *'Green ICT needs a champion. There must be someone in*

*the organisation responsible for Green ICT technologies and policies to achieve truly sustainable outcomes'*⁴. On the question of responsibility, the report concluded that the Australian Government agencies were well ahead of the private industry in appointing a leader in the Green ICT role. (See Figure 1)

WHERE IS THE AFL AND ITS CLUBS WITH GREEN ICT?

When reviewing the websites of the AFL and those of its league clubs, only six had content that highlight their participation in some form of environmental awareness program or had performed some environmental awareness activity within their respective communities. There were however ten clubs and the AFL that had participated in the 'Go for Green Footy' program and of the five who had performed environmental awareness programs, only two appeared to be actively involved in promoting environmental awareness through environmental projects (Essendon Football Club)⁵ and adopting an environment strategy (Carlton Football Club).⁶

Therefore quantifying this early observation:

- 65% participated in a carbon offset program ('Go for Green Footy'), i.e. ten clubs and the AFL.
- 35% participated in some environmental activity and reported them on their websites, i.e. five clubs and the AFL. There could be some unreported cases here that we could hope.
- 12% or only two clubs appear to be genuinely concerned with climate change, i.e. the Carlton and the Essendon Football Clubs

The Carlton Football Club has a vision to be the most environmentally friendly club in the AFL and an aim to increase awareness of recycling and the

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