

Lawyers urge paper cut

Lawyers for Forests has released a kit to help law firms become greener workplaces.

Each month, a national law firm will use more than 2000 reams of white copy paper at a cost of about \$11,000 – and that is only in its Melbourne office. It is staggering figures such as these that has led Lawyers for Forests (LFF) to spend 12 months developing a kit designed to help law firms cut their paper use and make their workplaces greener.

Becoming Forest-Friendly: An Eco-Kit for Law Firms contains suggestions to lessen law firms' reliance on products made from native and old-growth forests.

While a large portion of the kit deals with paper use, it also covers office fit-outs and furniture, energy, water, recycling, and "green" superannuation funds.

The kit asks firms to:

- avoid using any paper products made from wood pulp sourced from the logging of native forests;
- avoid using any paper products bleached using a chlorine gas process;
- encourage staff to limit printing and copying only essential documents; and
- purchase at least 25 per cent of their energy needs in the form accredited "green energy".

The kit contains an audit sheet to help law firms take stock of their current products and processes and a checklist to help firms implement short, medium and long-term goals.

Funded by the Victoria Law Foundation and endorsed by the Law Institute's Young Lawyers' Section, the kit also lists brand paper products to either use or avoid.

Just 100 kits were printed and sent out to 70 large city firms, the Federation of Community Legal Centres and country law associations. The kit is available on both the LFF website and the Victoria Law Foundation website.

LFF secretary Anna Stewart said the idea for a kit stemmed from "pretty horrendous"

figures relating to the logging of native and old-growth forests and paper use by law firms.

For example, since European settlement more than 90 per cent of Australia's original old-growth forests and 75 per cent of rainforests have disappeared. Today, native forests cover just 5 per cent of Australia's land areas, with rainforests and old-growth forests each covering less than 1 per cent.

Ms Stewart said law firms enacting the kit's recommendations would help lessen the reliance on products used from native forests.

She said some firms have instituted environmentally friendly work practices, although it was not possible to gauge how widespread those changes have been. What was clear was that the large majority of firms had not felt the need to act.

"It may be that people may not be conscious of it.

"If you're sitting in your office and you print out a whole contract you are perhaps not conscious of the fact that three doors down that person is doing the exact same thing as you. You see yourself as an individual."

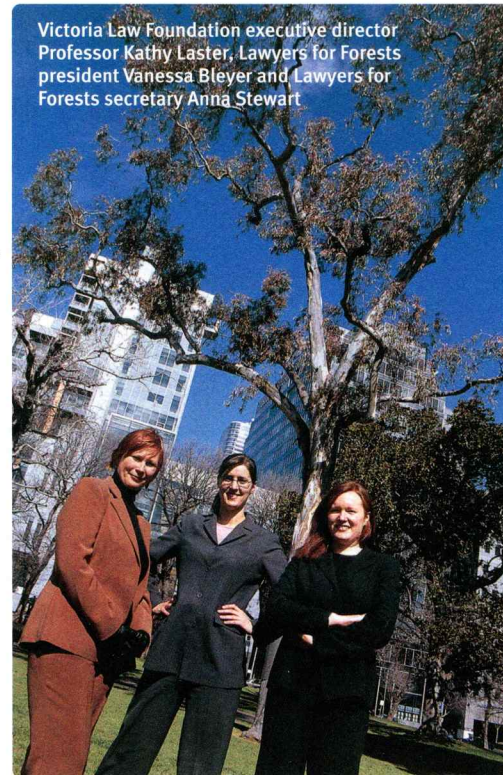
Ms Stewart said the outcomes from implementing the kit's recommendations would provide benefits for native forests and also participating law firms.

"Our argument is that we think that with corporate responsibility and triple bottom line reporting becoming more prevalent this sort of initiative being taken on by a firm may actually win it clients.

"We think it will certainly attract graduates from law school who have an environmental and a social conscience. So it can be a selling point for a firm to say that they have implemented these environmental measures."

The kit was launched at the LFF's annual

Victoria Law Foundation executive director Professor Kathy Laster, Lawyers for Forests president Vanessa Bleyer and Lawyers for Forests secretary Anna Stewart



general meeting on 22 August.

The meeting also saw the election of Lethbridges first-year solicitor Vanessa Bleyer as LFF president for the next 12 months.

Ms Bleyer, who takes over from Lucy Turner, urged lawyers with concerns over the future of Australia's old-growth forests to join the group.

"They can be a non-active member, which shows their support for the issues we deal with.

"Or they can be an active member and be involved in such things as law and policy. Our role is active and we work closely with the government, so you really see the rewards from the work that you do."

To download a copy of the Lawyers for Forests Eco-Kit, go to www.lawyersforforests.asn.au or to the Victoria Law Foundation website at www.victorialaw.org.au. ●

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