

Accommodation and food services

Alto Hotel

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Typical small-medium businesses in the accommodation sector can use around 100,000kWh of electricity in a year, a hefty amount. When the Alto Hotel was built in 2006 (inside the shell of a former union headquarters in Bourke St Melbourne), sustainability features were planned and built in right from the start. This has enabled the hotel to achieve outstanding savings in energy, waste and water use.

Water

- Water flow from bathroom and kitchen taps reduced from 9 to 6 litres per minute.
Water flow from showers reduced from 9 to 8 litres per minute
- Guests are encouraged to have towels changed every alternate day and linen every third day rather than daily. An offsite commercial laundry is used to achieve greater water efficiencies
- Water tanks in the hotel's car park capture rainwater and deliver it to some of the toilets. Rain water is also used for cleaning and garden watering
- Waste water from the air conditioning also goes to the tanks

Energy

- 'Staggered stud' wall system which allows for better insulation. On average, heating and cooling accounts for 36% of energy use in small to medium businesses. Installing and checking insulation makes it easier to maintain a desired temperature and is a simple way to save energy
- Several layers of floor covering to improve insulation. Floor, ceiling and wall insulation is also a simple and effective energy saving action to implement
- Heat reflecting 13mm thick glass and double glazing on all windows.

Another easy to implement action is installing draught seals around windows, doors and other cracks which allow heated or cool air to escape.

- Operable windows to reduce demand for air conditioning.
- 6 star energy efficient air conditioning systems with 'sensor technology', which turns the units off when the room is unoccupied.
- Hot water provided by instantaneous gas hot water systems, which heat water only when it's needed. These are far more efficient than electric systems or storage systems where water is kept hot all the time.
- 98% of all lighting in hotel rooms is fluoro or LED, and the owners are gradually replacing the fluoro lamps with LED. Replacing existing lighting with more efficient lighting is a straightforward task that can save between 30% to 90% of the electricity required.
- Roof is painted with heat-reflecting white paint.
- Installing an electric car recharging station and providing free parking for hybrid and electric cars to promote their use.
- Encouraging walking and public transport to guests and staff. 80% of the hotel's employees use public transport to travel to work.
- The hotel purchases 100% Greenpower and offsets its remaining greenhouse gas emissions .

Waste

- Elimination of all plastic bottles for toiletries, replacing them with refillable, pump-action dispensers.
- Preference to suppliers with products that are made from recycled content, are recyclable and biodegradable. For example bio-degradable bin-liners, pens and key cards made from corn starch.
- Refilling printer ink cartridges, and requiring all the hotel's office paper, toilet tissues and paper towels to be made from recycled paper.
- All rooms have separate bins for waste and recycling.
- Composting system for kitchen scraps.
- All bulk containers are returned to suppliers.
- Recycling all deep-frying oils from the central kitchen into bio-fuel.
- Reuse of all cardboard boxes by the local post office.
- Recycling by specialist companies of all paper, glass, plastics and fluorescent globes.

Results

- The hotel uses only 126.8L of mains water per guest night. This is 68% better than average.
- The hotel greenhouse gas emissions are only 3kg CO₂e per guest night. This is 78.6% better than average.
- 37% reduction in the volume of waste sent to landfill, down to only 3.8 litres per guest night. 54% of the site's solid waste is recycled, reused or composted.

Return on investment

The sustainability features added approximately \$450,000 to the building cost (\$5m total).

Savings are estimated at \$50,000 per year on expenses related to electricity, water, gas and chemicals. The hotel operators also believe that their sustainability features create a point of difference and increase customer goodwill. To put it simply, people like to stay in a hotel that's doing the right thing. This results in increased revenue and profit.

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www.altohotel.com.au

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