

The Alto Hotel on Bourke, Melbourne

Since 2006, the Alto Hotel on Bourke has been using EarthCheck to benchmark its performance. All aspects of the hotel's design and operations reflect a genuine, strong commitment to energy efficiency.

The vision

Alto Hotel on Bourke aspires to be the undisputed leader in energy efficiency.

Bourke is now pushing the boundaries of best practice, using only 35.7MJ per guest night, which is 76% better than best practice.

The business

The Alto Hotel on Bourke was built in 2004-05 and is the first hotel in Melbourne's central business district to become fully certified using EarthCheck science.

The boutique 4-star hotel offers 50 hotel rooms including 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, a restaurant and bar, relaxation room, book exchange and library, car parking and free access to a nearby gym.

The Alto Hotel's philosophy is to look after the environment by carefully monitoring the impacts of its energy consumption, while identifying ways to be more efficient and resource smart. Management strongly encourages the participation of all staff in finding innovative solutions.

Challenges

Heritage building:

Heritage buildings are notoriously energy inefficient. The air-conditioning is usually primitive and with high ceilings and large room areas are difficult to heat and cool.

Understanding

The biggest challenge was generating understanding of the energy reduction initiatives among the sub-contractors during construction. However, the owners believe that times have changed with the building industry, councils and governments significantly popularizing these initiatives.

Justification

At times, Alto Hotel has been challenged to justify many of its initiatives as they may not show an immediate return on investment. However there are returns in other forms such as customer and peer recognition and professional pride.

Energy-efficiency achievements

Energy-efficient design

Alto Hotel has been built with energy efficiency in mind using only 35.7MJ per guest night. The design and choice of energy efficient materials ensure the hotel achieves optimal efficiency from space heating and cooling, with minimal heat or cold ingress into the building.

Initiative:

- Using a staggered stud wall system which allows for through-going thermal bats.
- Using several layers of floor covering to improve insulation, including a 5mm layer of REGUPOL (recycled car tyres) and yellow tongue compressed chipboard.
- Using heat-reflecting 13mm thick glass and double glazing on all windows.
- These windows are able to be opened to allow natural cooling.

How to do it: energy-efficient design

Incorporating energy-efficient design into your business' building. Consider your choosing materials and fittings that are energy efficient can save your business money in the long run and it will be less likely that you will have to replace/upgrade to more energy-efficient fittings at a later date.

Energy-efficient fittings

Other initiatives to optimise space heating and cooling, increase lighting efficiency and reduce energy wastage have been implemented in the Alto Hotel. All these innovations help to save on energy.

Initiatives:

- Installing 6 star energy efficient air conditioning systems. The systems rely on 'inverter' technology, 'R-410 A' refrigerant gas and 'sensor technology', which turns the units off when there is no one in the room.
- 98% of all lighting in hotel rooms is fluoro or LED, and the owners are gradually replacing the fluoro lamps with LED.
- Use of 100% renewable energy.
- Guests' rooms are fitted with energy saving key-tags that switch off lighting on leaving the rooms.
- Hot water is heated on-demand.

Energy achievements in transport:

- Airport transfers in a hybrid limousine are available.
- Installation of an electric car recharging station in the undercover car park.
- Encourage guests to walk to most major attractions which are within a 2 to 10 minute walk from the hotel.
- Encourage guests and staff to use public transport to go further afield.
- Select locally grown or produced items to reduce 'food miles'.

How to do it: encouraging transport alternatives

Staff at your business can encourage guests to use public transport or to walk to attractions where possible by providing them with information such as:

- possible alternatives available to them highlighted in maps.
- thought-provoking signage around your business identifying how their energy impact can be reduced.
- providing transport alternatives for guests such as business branded bikes.

Staff in charge of purchasing can take care to purchase locally sourced products to reduce the impacts of travel associated with product procurement.

Promoting energy efficiency

The Alto Hotel staff are proud of their achievements in energy efficiency and uses various avenues to promote their values to guests, suppliers and local businesses.

Initiatives:

- Electric or hybrid vehicles park for free with free use of the recharging stations.
- Alto uses suppliers with energy efficient policies.
- Encourage guest's involvement in energy saving initiatives.
- Encouraging walking and public transport to guests and staff ahead of taxis with 80% of the hotel's employees using public transport to travel to work.
- Partnership with local businesses to select locally grown or produced items.

How to do it: promoting energy efficiency

You can easily promote your energy-efficiency efforts through various avenues including:

- giving a tour of your energy efficiency initiatives to guests and neighbourhood.
- Praising your staff in their efforts to reduce energy consumption in your business, offer rewards.

- encouraging guest involvement in energy saving initiatives and make it easy for them to use less energy intensive alternatives.
- network with other businesses and share your experiences and gain insight on what works for others.

The future

The Alto Hotel on Bourke continuously strives to improve their energy efficiency and is aiming to separate the commercial kitchen's hot water from gas fired to a solar system.

'We are getting an increasing number of encouraging comments from guests who appreciate our efforts – and not only from leisure travellers. The corporate sector and government departments are also developing a preference for hotels with green accreditation.' Ricardo Krauskopf, owner of Alto Hotel on Bourke.