

IP AUSTRALIA **CASE STUDY**



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IP AUSTRALIA: vital stats in brief

- IP Australia is the Australian Government agency responsible for administering patents, trade marks, designs and plant breeder's rights. It is a prescribed agency within the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) but operates independently and reports directly to the Minister.
- With its central office in Canberra, ACT, IP Australia has state offices across Australia.
- Employs over 900 people, most of whom operate from the ACT office.
- The building occupies approximately 22,000 sqm over three separate wings.

CERTIFICATIONS WITH NCS INTERNATIONAL:

ISO 14001 Environmental
Management System

ISO 9001 Quality
Management System



BACKGROUND

The global environmental challenges presented by climate change and the corresponding need to foster the sustainable use of resources are now front and centre in Australia's national agenda. In line both with broader government policy and community expectations, government agencies are actively seeking to be at the forefront of environmentally responsible practices in whatever field they operate. One such organisation is IP Australia, which recently became one of the first intellectual property offices globally to achieve ISO 14001 certification of its Environmental Management System (EMS).

Reasons to implement a certified EMS

- Deliver a more disciplined approach to environmental issues and promote a positive corporate environmental footprint.
- Demonstrate a positive corporate image and take a leadership role on a core community and social issue.
- Build awareness of environmental issues among employees and reinforce staff values.
- Provide an accountable mechanism to deliver best practice approaches to environmental issues.



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Making a difference in a low-risk organisation

Fatima Beattie, Deputy Director General of IP Australia, was a member of the Environmental Management Committee responsible for overseeing the Environmental Management System. As she explains, while the organisation is primarily considered ‘low-risk’ environmentally, there were some compelling motivations to ensure that IP Australia was doing its bit to reduce its carbon footprint.

“This was a key strategic initiative for IP Australia and one that aimed to reflect our staff values with respect to the environment through disciplined environmental practices. Our aim is to reduce our organisational carbon footprint and build on our reputation as a good corporate citizen that operates in a sustainable manner,” explains Mrs Beattie.

Tangible benefits from the certified EMS

Although the system has only recently been implemented, there have already been measurable benefits in terms of waste reduction, energy use and recycling, a result with which IP Australia is extremely pleased.

The majority of potential impacts and risks identified for IP Australia related to building upkeep and use of resources through lighting, heating and waste management.

One of the first things put in place for IP Australia’s EMS were methods of measuring the outputs and tracking usage of energy and resources, so there was a benchmark to start from.

“When comparing our results over the past three quarters of the year to the initial annual result of the previous year, there’s already been a significant reduction in energy and water use,” says Mrs Beattie.

Get on board: engaging the people

Although a lot of staff were very keen to improve their impacts on the environment, it was important that all staff were aware of the system and more importantly, that they supported it.

A vital element of staff engagement at IP Australia was the introduction of the ‘ideas database’. Staff are invited to offer suggestions and ideas that might improve environmental performance.

“To date IP Australia has had over 100 ideas that have come from staff and many of these ideas are being actively pursued by the Environmental Management Committee. Initiatives already implemented include access to fabric shopping bags for staff use, an environmentally friendly message placed onto staff email signatures asking recipients to think about the need to print, a car pool database, mobile phone recycling and various staff education activities. These add to the environmental initiatives we already had in place and collectively help reduce our impacts,” says Mrs Beattie.

In addition, IP Australia engaged Environmental Champions to communicate the system among staff.





The role of NCS International: building strong foundations

NCS International offered an easy-to-follow system framework and end-to-end service for IP Australia when implementing it EMS.

NCS International provided a pre-assessment and a gap analysis for IP Australia which helped ensure the organisation was on track every step of the way.

“Not only did IP Australia achieve ISO 14001 certification, but the auditor advised that this was the first time in his experience he had found no non-conformances in any organisation’s Environmental Management System.” Mrs Beattie advised staff during IP Australia’s celebration, which was also attended by representatives of NCS International. NCS International’s involvement and checking gave the organisation assurance in knowing it was headed in the right direction.

“IP Australia is currently developing further environmental strategies in conjunction with staff and customers to reduce its carbon footprint and is committed to continuous improvement,” said Mrs Beattie.

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Key messages from IP Australia

- Ensure that there is top-down commitment to the system, preferably with a key driver at senior management level to champion the system.
- Build the system from the ground up, and make use of all resources available to help smooth the process and avoid potentially costly mistakes. Training, pre-assessment and gap analysis can make a big difference to outcomes.
- Actively engage staff in the running and improvement of the system and ensure there is both strong resourcing support and open communication for it.
- Measure results to ensure continuous improvement.
- Determine key aspects to focus on maximum impact and results.



Australian Government

IP Australia

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