

# Ice cream to save the world

From small businesses, big ideas on saving the environment can grow, writes **Damien Lynch**.

Ice cream franchise Cold Rock is one in a growing number of small businesses that are moving to lower carbon emissions and even becoming carbon neutral to help solve global warming.

The NSW-based Carbon Reduction Institute has more than 50 small businesses from a wide range of industry sectors certified under its NoCO<sub>2</sub> and LowCO<sub>2</sub> programs. This includes the Agincourt hotel in Sydney, which became Australia's first greenhouse friendly, carbon neutral pub on January 1, 2007.

The institute is also providing advice to small businesses that are either waiting for an emissions assessment or are working towards full certification.

The national head office of ice cream franchise Cold Rock, based at Arundel in the Gold Coast region, received NoCO<sub>2</sub> certification from the institute in September 2007. For that to happen, Cold Rock management had carbon emissions calculated in a thorough assessment, including emissions from all three scopes outlined under Kyoto standards. Management reduced carbon emissions where possible and offset the remainder to make the head office 100 per cent carbon neutral.

Now focus has switched to making more than 60 Cold Rock franchise stores carbon neutral.

"Certifying the head office is the first step in a process whereby we hope to get all franchises under the head office to also become carbon neutral," says the institute's managing director,

Rob Cawthorne. "Once this has occurred, customers will be able to purchase a carbon neutral ice cream and the stores will be able to display the NoCO<sub>2</sub> logo.

"No Cold Rock store is yet able to display the logo or claim to be carbon neutral, but over the next few months we hope to see a significant number of the stores commit to this process."

There are 66 Cold Rock franchise stores nationally, and seven more are expected to open by the end of June. They cost between \$250,000 and \$350,000.

Norm Hunt, who co-owns the Cold Rock business with John Booth, says he is hopeful franchisees will follow the lead set by management.

"We have informed them about our move to become carbon neutral and we have arranged a reduced assessment fee for the early-bird franchisees," Hunt

**"We can minimise the adverse impact we have on the planet."**

says. "Several have expressed interest in it for their retail businesses. There is no compulsion here, but we trust that our actions will speak louder than words.

"Sooner or later it strikes us all that we should and can minimise the adverse impact that we have on the planet. We owe it to future generations to do whatever is possible to minimise that impact. We see it as being about corporate responsibility and sustainability, basically being good corporate citizens."

Hunt is chief executive of Cold Rock and runs the company day to day. Booth looks after strategy, finance and human resources.

Cawthorne, who has run a small business in software development and IT support called Vigilant Solutions for the past 10 years, says the institute's business model is designed with small businesses in mind. He says that determining the carbon footprint of any small business requires commitment from the client to provide specific information that is likely to cost both time and money, but nothing significant.

The institute's carbon assessors engage clients to collect data including fossil fuel use from gas and petrol, waste emissions, sums spent on accommodation and stationery and flights and staff travel to and from work. Once collected, the carbon footprint of the business is determined.

"In the carbon footprint report, we identify reduction opportunities and recommend the customer undertake these where possible," Cawthorne says. "This enables the customer to determine how much effort and time they want to put into actually reducing emissions as against simply paying for offsets. In the case of Cold Rock, time and effort is being focused on engaging their franchises, as we can make more significant reductions in these franchises than in the head office.

"Every certified business is required to report on major or dynamic emission sources on a quarterly basis, so that we can track the effect of their reduction strategies and highlight any significant emission changes."

LowCO<sub>2</sub> is a lower certification to the NoCO<sub>2</sub> and requires a slightly different accounting method.

It is designed for businesses which cannot afford the cost of neutrality within their profit margin.

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