

The West Australian

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2007

p.7

STARS FOR GREEN HOTEL

Plane trips, CDs and even diets can be made carbon neutral. Now hotels have joined the list of activities or businesses that can have their carbon emissions offset with the planting of trees in a far-flung rainforest.

The Australian Hotels Association has recognized the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle as the first WA hotel to become carbon neutral and awarded it the inaugural AHA environmental initiative award.

Esplanade Hotel managing director Marylyn New has offset the hotel's carbon footprint by securing 9.6ha of Ecuadorian rainforest. Ms New has been imparting a message of environmental responsibility to her staff for years according to sales and marketing manager Kelsie Johnston.

"The hotel has been involved in environmental initiatives for about 10 years," Ms Johnston said. "Declaring ourselves carbon neutral isn't a promotional or political stunt, it is something that Ms New has pushed for a while.

"We've been involved in the Federal Government's Greenhouse Challenge program which gave us a AAA Tourism accredited Green Star hotel rating a decade ago and we've progressed from there."

Ms Johnston said continual refurbishment and upgrading of the 300 rooms has allowed the hotel to lessen its impact on the environment.

"That includes installing things like water saving shower heads, energy efficient light bulbs and computer controlled air conditioning," she said. "We're also encouraging staff to send emails rather than use paper. Our new Citroen C4 sales cars are all diesel fuelled so they are environmentally friendly too. It's phenomenal what you can do to help the environment."

The Esplanade's focus was on environmental impact, event before cost.

"We look at everything we do and ask if we can do it in an environmentally friendly way," she said. The environmentally friendly option will always be taken as long as there isn't a massive cost blow out.

The 9.6ha of Ecuadorian rainforest saved in collaboration with rainforest rescue has been the Esplanade Hotel's more eye-catching move.

"It's great because it has helped save the frogs and the parrots that live in the area," Ms Johnston said. "People often ask why we decided to go offshore but Ms New decided she wanted to further environmentalism in a Third World country that doesn't have the funds or the resources to do it themselves."