

SUSTAINABLE EVENT MANAGEMENT

By Meegan Jones

Sustainability. Greening. Environmentally preferable. Corporate social responsibility. Carbon emissions. Eco Friendly. You will have heard all of these terms, and may be wondering if they are the same thing, are related, are interchangeable and are all trying to get to the same point? Well, yes and no.



The hope for this new column is to demystify and decode these concepts and to lead you to where you can jump off into the world of Sustainable Event Management armed, informed and ready to take action.

My name is Meegan Jones, and I am an events sustainability addict. I have lived and breathed this stuff for quite a few years now. I have talked it through, thrashed it around, looked at it inside out, and wrote a book on it, all while still getting neck deep in compost bins and waste vegetable oil fuel at festivals.

So what is driving the subject of sustainable event management to the fore? The ever present threat of climate change impacts, and the increased understanding and acceptance of sustainable development by society, industry and government, are all leading to the business-as-usual model becoming redundant. We can't keep doing what we have always done for much longer. Many readers will have taken great steps, leaps and bounds, towards reducing the impacts of their event operations. Many however, may not have yet touched the subject. That my friends, is going to have to change!

New international standards for event sustainability management systems (ISO 20121) along with protocols for reporting and event sustainability performance (GRI EOSS) are just around the corner - launching in 2012. The time is now for a tune-up, upgrade and download of as much sustainability info as possible so you are well placed to identify the issues and to implement impact-reducing initiatives in your festival and event planning.

I have lots to talk with you about, and I hope I can provide answers and clarity. More than likely, more questions will be raised and more discussion will be needed.

While the principles of Sustainable Development are widely known and accepted across most nations, how this applies to the festivals and events industry, and how it plays out in action through an event's planning and logistics have endless possibilities. In this column we will drill down and dissect the issues and give you practical advice to common sustainability challenges. We will also look at how we can affect change industry-wide. Our supply chains need to green up their acts, but unless we, as festival and event producers, don't ask them to (and know what to ask of them), change may not be forthcoming.

I hope to supply you with the topics to consider (purchasing, waste, transport, energy, water, sanitation, accommodation, destination, human rights, fair labour, legacy ...), how to uncover the issues as they apply to your festival or event, and most importantly, how to use your festival as a showpiece for sustainable development solutions in action. Let's get cracking!