



The clean team at Fairfax Regional Printers, (l-r) Peter Anderson, Michael Aubrey and Anthony Payne.

## AND NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A TREE-HUGGER TO CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT—JUST ASK THE STAFF AT FAIRFAX REGIONAL PRINTERS, NEWCASTLE, WHERE A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM HAS SHOWN THAT ANYONE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

When the opportunity arose for businesses in the Hunter Valley region to be involved in Newcastle City Council's Cleaner Production program back in March 2004, the staff at Fairfax Regional Printers at Beresfield were happy to jump on board.

"This plant has always been well-run and we believed that we had the environmental side of things taken care of as well," explains Michael Aubrey, plant manager. "So when the council approached us, we decided it wouldn't do any harm to have a look at it."

It was a decision that paid off. Now the plant boasts the enviable reputation of having significantly improved its waste management and water usage levels, among other initiatives. Having taken out five awards for Environment and Safety in 2005 alone, the Newcastle plant is now on a roll and shows no signs of slowing down.

But trees don't grow overnight, and neither do visionary printing plants. Let's take a step back to when the environmental program was just a seed waiting to germinate.

### FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW

It began with a free 24-hour waste audit which left no stone unturned. The results of this audit proved to be a turning point, and an eye-opener, says Peter Anderson, assistant mechanical services coordinator (better known throughout the company as the 'Environment Champion').

"We started working out what we were throwing away and realised that there was a hell of a lot of things that could be reused or recycled," he says.

From here, the company enlisted the help of a local waste firm to help separate waste. This gave Anderson

"If your business has a poor environmental performance then you're going to pay one way or the other." — Anthony Payne, Fairfax Regional Printers.

and his team a fresh perspective.

"It's sometimes good to get an outside person to come in and have a look at what you're doing," he says. "Just from segregating and separating all our waste, we reduced our waste in landfill from 18 cubic metres a week to 5 cubic metres a week almost overnight."

Like all changes, things take time and Anderson is a firm believer in starting small and getting bigger.

"A lot of people think 'Oh that's just a bit of plastic' but it can make a big difference in the grand scheme of things," he says.

### SAVINGS BY THE PALLET-LOAD

Cynics may read this and scoff, but Fairfax's methods have achieved results. Take, for example, the installation of needle valve flow controls to the replenishment systems of the plant's film and plate processors. This has reduced water consumption in the plate room from 40,000 litres a week to 30,000 litres a week, equating to half a million litres of water a year. PET plastic bottles that were once sent to landfill at a rate of 45 to 50 a week are now being recycled with approximately 300kg of cling wrap that comes in on pallets.

And pallets, while good for transporting stock, often aren't much

good once the stock has been taken away. Frustrated at the ever-growing number of pallets left lying around waiting to be taken to landfill, a determined Anderson spent weeks phoning different companies until he found a manufacturer who took them away to reuse. The recent introduction of CTP is also expected to save money and water.

"We were anticipating that CTP would reduce our water usage by about a million litres a year but now it's put in and we've done the figures, it looks like we will be saving 1.8 million," says Anthony Payne, general manager.

### NO END IN SIGHT

When it comes to savings, however, money isn't the company's only driving force.

"People have to realise that dollar-saving isn't necessarily everything," says Aubrey. "A lot of the stuff we do has a financial benefit and has been cost-neutral or actually saved us money, but we do it just as much for the social and environmental benefits."

Currently, the plant is in the process of looking at making modifications to air compressors along with automating lights and weighing up air conditioning versus natural airflow. These changes have caught on, and Payne recounts how other printers have followed Fairfax's lead.

"It's starting to spread throughout the industry," he says. "If your business has a poor environmental performance then you're going to pay one way or the other."

Determined to stay at the forefront, the Newcastle team don't believe in resting on their laurels and look at the process of changing their site as an on-going task.

"We don't see the environmental program having an end," says Payne. "It will be something that can always have continuous improvements." ●