

# Tourism Operators RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE



Reef-friendly  
Carbon  
Offsetting

*"I believe that environmental investment through sustainable forestry and carbon offsetting is the smart way forward which will also benefit our children's future."*

Steve Edmondson,  
Low Isles Sailaway



**Australian Government**

**Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority**

# Reef-friendly Carbon Offsetting



## What is carbon offsetting?

Carbon offsetting is the final step you need to take for your business to become carbon neutral.

Having calculated the carbon footprint of your business and done all you can to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions, you can look at other ways to compensate for your remaining emissions, through activities such as tree planting or investing in carbon offset schemes.

Lots of companies have established, or are funding projects, which help measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (see the websites listed opposite). The investment creates carbon offset credits or certificates which a business can buy from registered retailers at market price.

Typical carbon offset activities that offer additional environmental benefits are:

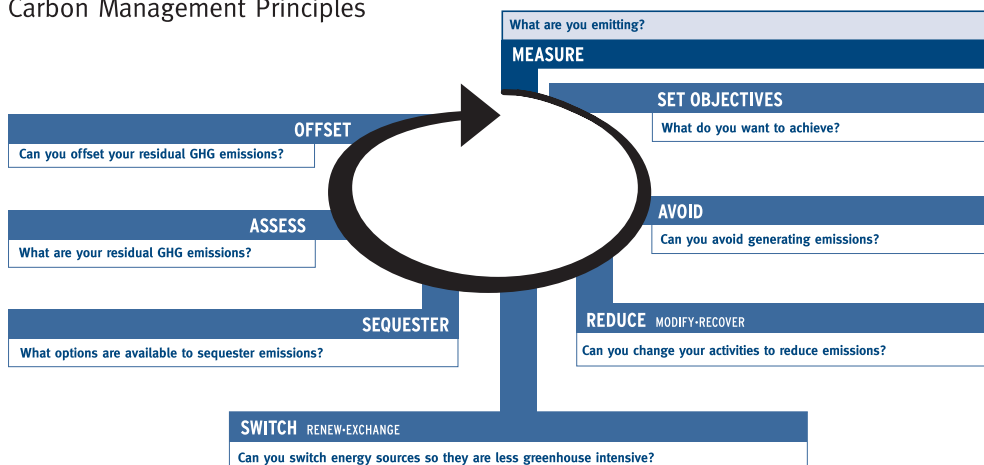
- Energy efficiency projects
- Forestry activities
- Avoidance of methane emissions
- Renewable energy.

## Why should I care about carbon offsets?

With climate change identified in the *Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009* as the greatest threat to the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef, it's in the interests of your business and the environment to become carbon neutral.

Buying carbon offsets is the final step in this process, which includes avoiding and reducing greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub>-e) emissions.

### Carbon Management Principles



Permission granted from EPA Victoria to use this diagram from their Carbon Management Plan, available at: [www.epa.vic.gov.au/climate-change/carbon-management/default.asp](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/climate-change/carbon-management/default.asp)

Being carbon neutral will help you enhance the long-term resilience and sustainability of the Reef, the tourism industry and coastal communities relying on it.

Voluntary purchase of carbon offsets will benefit your business by:

- Helping to meet your business goals of reducing your carbon footprint
- Preparing you for future regulatory mechanisms that may be introduced by the government
- Engaging employees on environmental issues
- Appealing to informed customers who care about their own carbon footprint.

## How do I offset my carbon use?

- To help you understand and manage your business's carbon use you'll need to prepare a simple carbon management strategy that sets out the steps you plan to take to become carbon neutral (see diagram).
- Before buying carbon offsets, make sure you have measured your emissions and put into practice all possible internal emission avoidance and reduction measures
- Work out how much you are prepared to invest in offsets and the type of project you want to support. Look for Queensland projects that have direct benefits for the Reef, and focus on healthy waterways, biodiversity protection, tree planting and care of fish habitat
- The market in carbon offset credits is currently mostly unregulated, so look for an offset provider that is accredited to a recognised standard and is independently verified.

## How will my customers react?

Reef operators who have introduced offset schemes report that visitors are willing to contribute to tangible environmental initiatives that support a sustainable Reef tourism industry.

Well-informed visitors from countries more advanced in climate change mitigation activities are particularly likely to be supportive – especially where the offset project has direct relevance to the Reef. Education is an important tool to inspire others to take action themselves.

Before making environmental claims about your product, please visit the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to learn about Green marketing and the Australian Consumer Law at : [www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/815763](http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/815763).



### National Carbon Offset Standard

The Australian Government's *National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS)*, which replaces the Greenhouse Friendly Program, provides guidance on voluntary offsets and a voluntary standard for businesses to use in becoming carbon neutral. [www.climatechange.gov.au/en/government/initiatives/national-carbon-offset-standard.aspx](http://www.climatechange.gov.au/en/government/initiatives/national-carbon-offset-standard.aspx)

Independent company Low Carbon Australia manages certification of businesses against the NCOS through the *Carbon Neutral Program*. Join the program and offer your customers carbon neutral experiences! Find the certification guidelines at: [www.lowcarbonaustralia.com.au/](http://www.lowcarbonaustralia.com.au/)

When booking flights for your business make sure you make the most of airline carbon offset programs.



## Reef-friendly Carbon Offsetting

### Where can I find out more about carbon offsets?

GBRMPA's What you can do [www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/tourism-industry/tackling-climate-change](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/our-partners/tourism-industry/tackling-climate-change)

GBRMPA's Tourism Emissions Calculator [www.emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/resourcedb/](http://www.emissionscalculator.gbrmpa.gov.au/resourcedb/)

Carbon Offset Watch - Australian offset providers and types of carbon offsets [www.carbonoffsetwatch.org.au](http://www.carbonoffsetwatch.org.au)

Australian Government: Tackling the challenge of climate change [www.climatechange.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.gov.au)

Carbon Neutral Program Guidelines National Carbon Offset Standard, Version 2.0 27 June 2011 <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/government/initiatives/low-carbon-australia/ncos-carbon-neutral-program/carbon-neutral-program-guidelines.aspx>

Australian Carbon Trust – supporting energy efficient action [www.lowcarbonaustralia.com.au/](http://www.lowcarbonaustralia.com.au/) <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/government/initiatives/low-carbon-australia.aspx>

Carbon Management Principles (EPA Victoria) – framework for measuring GHG emissions <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/climate-change/carbon-management/default.asp>

Ecofund Queensland – invest in sustainable energy services [www.ecofund.net.au](http://www.ecofund.net.au)

Greenfleet: Planting native forests through to offset pollution [www.greenfleet.com.au/](http://www.greenfleet.com.au/)

Business advice on how to become carbon neutral [www.carbonneutral.com.au/](http://www.carbonneutral.com.au/)

### Checklist

- ✓ Prepare a carbon management strategy for your business
- ✓ Measure your carbon footprint and look for practical ways to avoid and reduce your emissions. Plan to offset the residual emissions associated with your organisation or product
- ✓ Budget to invest in Reef-friendly offsets through a certified offset provider
- ✓ Tell your customers what you are doing
- ✓ Monitor the change over time and adapt your strategy accordingly
- ✓ Consider becoming certified as a Carbon Neutral business.



## Case Study – Low Isles Sailaway



Steve and Katrina Edmondson, owner/operators of Low Isles Sailaway in Port Douglas, take their carbon offsets very seriously.

Environmental initiatives on their 33-passenger luxury catamaran Sailaway IV include use of wind power, recycled bio-diesel and 4-stroke outboards, with onboard wastewater treatment and recycling.

Environmental education and reef health monitoring are also key components of their operation with crew actively involved in GBRMPA's Eye on the Reef monitoring program.



In 2009, the Edmondsons invested in a 68-acre ex cane paddock outside Port Douglas, with plans to boost their carbon offsets through staged revegetation projects in partnership with the Cairns Regional Council and with advice from forestry experts.

"We were looking for something we could do ourselves to provide offsets, something local and credible that connects the World Heritage rainforest with the Reef," said Steve.

Steve used the GBRMPA Emissions Calculator to estimate their residual carbon emissions. They needed to plant just 51 trees to offset these emissions and become carbon neutral. In the first year they planted 7,000 trees.

This first stage planting on 'Eco Shamba Tree Farm' will establish a nature corridor of high biodiversity between the rainforest and nearby wetland. Future plantings of native timber trees for sustainable forestry will provide



local investment opportunities for carbon offsets.

For every passenger onboard, Low Isles Sailaway makes a voluntary contribution of \$10 from the ticket price towards these sustainability actions. It's no surprise that Sailaway Cruises is accredited by Ecotourism Australia as a Climate Action Leader.

The Edmondsons see carbon offsets as a key factor of best environmental practices. Steve said, "I hope that the continual development of carbon trading and offset schemes will create incentives for more businesses to think and act green."

For more information:  
[www.sailawayportdouglas.com/](http://www.sailawayportdouglas.com/) and  
[www.ecoshamba.com/](http://www.ecoshamba.com/)

