

Museum Victoria Exhibiting green credentials

Award for Excellence in Green Purchasing — Victorian State Government

This award recognises a State Government department or agency who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to green purchasing.

Environmental responsibility is listed as one of Museum Victoria's six strategic directions and as a result they have created an environmental sustainability policy. The need to embed environmental practices and products into the procurement procedures of goods, services and works is listed as a key priority in the policy.

Museum Victoria has introduced a number of green purchasing initiatives, including: installing infrastructure in the Melbourne Museum car park to reduce lighting demand; introducing a 100 desktop and 50 notebook Energy Star-compliant computers; and creating the Museum Victoria Cost of Life (MVCOL) tool which enables users to calculate the environmental and operating impact of technology across the life of a Museum exhibition.



A Day in Pompeii exhibition with sets made from recycled Xanita Board, Melbourne Museum. Photo: Heath Warwick © Museum Victoria 2009

Highly visible on the environmental agenda is the organisation's commitment to procuring sustainable exhibition design for all new exhibitions following successful trials with exhibitions such as such as *Dinosaur Walk*, *Waters of Tuvalu* and *A Day in Pompeii*.

MUSEUM VICTORIA'S ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN APPROACH

- Purchase low impact materials
- Re-use what exists
- Integrate sustainable thinking into design thinking
- Undertake fabrication practices that minimise waste
- Work to reduce other environmental impacts
- Communicate this approach to contractors, suppliers and staff

Museum Victoria aims to use best sustainable practice in new exhibition creation by applying life cycle thinking – addressing all the life stages of a product's impact from manufacturing, use and disposal including re-use and renewal.

Using locally manufactured products, giving preference to recycled rather than 'new' materials and seeking suppliers with environmental certification are all high on the list of priorities for Museum Victoria. Project staff dismantling previous exhibitions are compiling, sorting, storing or donating materials and re-using wherever possible.

Exhibition design and fabrication practices now consider using less material, even down to using 15mm glass instead of 18mm and changing fixings so that materials can be separated and reused more easily. Materials are laid out to most efficiently use sheet sizes, minimising waste. Lighting and floor coverings are considered for durability, longevity and sustainability.

Head MV Studios Tim Rolfe found the most difficult aspect of getting the sustainable exhibition design initiative up and running was to actually take the first step.

“It can be very overwhelming when you look into all the things you really should be doing to produce and build sustainably – and that can have something of a paralysing effect, almost a “it’s too hard, let’s not do it.”

However, we decided we would not attempt to change the world in a day but simply make a start by adhering to the life cycle thinking aims for the project. It was amazing how quickly we were able to implement more sustainable practices and how they have a tendency to flow from one to another.

I look back now and the amount we have achieved in a relatively short space of time is incredible and the team working on it are very proud.”

The sustainability initiative is not a one off but something Museum Victoria is making a part of its everyday exhibition design practice.

The exhibition project team continues to research new materials, products and processes with sustainable emphasis; this need is being communicated to suppliers. Even the daily resource consumption of the team – printing, paper and so on – is being considered.

Rolfe is pleased with the results so far and sees the future of sustainable exhibitions as bright.

“Museum Victoria takes this issue seriously and the principles are consistently reviewed.

If we were to do something differently I think we may have embraced re-use a little more strongly earlier on.

As the manufacturing and recycling processes all have some cost no matter how green, if you can re-use a piece of glass or joinery or equipment or whatever in a new exhibition, it is a very sustainable way to go.”

Museum Victoria is the largest public museums organisation in Australia. It provides public access to its collections through three museums and oversees a wide range of research programs, the continued development of the state’s collections, and runs major education and research based websites. Currently Museum Victoria employs 700 staff and has numerous volunteers across all areas of the organisation.

Mid-way through the completion of the Science and Life Project, Museum Victoria is currently developing of two new major exhibitions for Melbourne Museum, continuing to apply sustainable exhibition practices as they go.

“... seeking suppliers with environmental certification [is]... high on the list of priorities”

| SUSTAINABLE EXHIBITION DESIGN AT MUSEUM VICTORIA | |
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| Waters of Tuvalu | Past Event August to November 2008 |
| A Day in Pompeii | Past Event June to October 2009 |
| Dinosaur Walk | Current Event |
| Wild: amazing animals in a changing world | Current Event |
| 600 million years: Victoria evolves | Future Event Scheduled June 2010 |
| Dynamic Earth | Future Event Scheduled October 2010 |