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AusLSA released its first report on the environmental consumption of law firms at its Official Launch event.

The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull, MP, and John Thwaites presided over the launch of the [Australian Legal Sector Alliance](#) (AusLSA) at Henry Davis York this evening, 29 March 2011.

AusLSA is a national association of law firms working collaboratively to promote sustainability across the legal sector. AusLSA encourages its members to measure and report their environmental impact and then provides resources to help them to reduce their footprint including a forum for law firms to share ideas and experiences about sustainability initiatives. AusLSA represents a new model; it is the first time in Australia that a sector-wide collaborative approach has been used to tackle a single issue.

AusLSA's first report, '*Environmental Consumption of AusLSA Members 2009/2010*', was launched at the event, which revealed the environmental footprint of the 8 AusLSA Executive members: Clayton Utz, DLA Phillips Fox, Henry Davis York, Jackson McDonald, Maddocks, McCullough Robertson, Norton Rose Australia and Swaab Attorneys.

The report utilises data submitted using the AusLSA Environmental Consumption Calculator (ECC), the only benchmarked environmental reporting system for law firms in Australia. The output represents a baseline for the Executive members, from which they will be able to measure the success of the sustainability initiatives that they implement in the future.

For the AusLSA Executive Members average electricity consumption was 3.1 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (t CO₂e) per employee. The variance between the firms is quite small, with values ranging from 2.5 to 3.9 t CO₂e per employee.

30.6% of all emissions from the Executive Members were derived from business travel, with flights (in all but one firm) responsible for over 90% of travel-related emissions.

In addition to carbon emissions, the report also covers paper consumption. On average, 126kg of paper is consumed per employee per annum in each of the Executive member firms. However, there is significant variance in paper use from 81kg to 178kg (per employee). This variance demonstrates that some firms have been much more successful in implementing paper reduction schemes. The AusLSA framework encourages our members to learn from each other and share their sustainability successes and challenges.

It is apparent from the individual reports that the size and structure of each firm has a significant impact on their footprint: larger firms, with multiple locations and a diverse client base tend, unsurprisingly, to have larger environmental footprints on a per capita basis. Given the variety of firms in the report, it is difficult to make any meaningful direct comparisons between them. However, as membership of AusLSA grows, we aim to develop meaningful legal industry benchmarks for sustainability performance.

Terence Jeyaretnam, Director of leading sustainability advisory firm [Net Balance](#) said: "AusLSA is an innovative model with enormous potential for promoting sustainability across the legal sector. The publication of this report demonstrates a significant commitment by the AusLSA Executive Members. In Australia, very few law firms have taken the bold step of publicly reporting their environmental footprint. By holding themselves accountable in this way, the AusLSA Executive Members should be commended for their courage and leadership in working together for the collective good."

The report is available to download at www.legalsectoralliance.com.au

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