

# Green credentials are just the recipe

By CHRIS VEDELAGO

MANY businesses may talk about going green, but Ferguson Plarre BAKEHOUSES has the goods to back it up.

More than eight months have passed since Ferguson Plarre moved into its new commercial bakery in Keilor Park, a cutting-edge facility with environment-friendly features that read like a sustainable development wish list: rainwater recycled to wash the delivery trucks and flush the toilets; excess heat from baked goods used to warm the building; solar heating and sensor-controlled lighting; and an energy recovery system that uses wasted heat from refrigeration units to power cake production.

Ralph Plarre, co-director of Ferguson Plarre, told BusinessDay the company was now seeing solid environmental returns from these innovations, which have led to reductions across the board in energy use, waste and the bakery's carbon footprint.

"The changes have been dramatic since we moved from our older facility, where there was very little we could do to improve sustainability in a major way," Mr Plarre said. "It's far easier to make a big change to sustainability when you can design a place from the ground up."

Energy use has increased just 50% despite quadrupling the amount of floor and refrigeration space in the bakery; they have effectively achieved a 60% decline in energy usage per square metre.

Gas usage has fallen by 13%,

## KEY POINTS

- Despite quadrupling floor and refrigeration space, energy use has declined 60%.
- A surge in sales has been attributed to the company's green credentials.

and the amount of waste headed to the city's landfills has fallen by half. Water usage has remained the same despite the massive increase in floor size and production output.

The Hino Hybrid electric diesel delivery truck the bakery acquired last year with financial assistance from Sustainability Victoria — reportedly the first of its kind in Victoria — uses 30% less fuel than the rest of the diesel vehicles in their fleet.

A high-tech monitoring system has been installed to track the energy and resource output of almost every device in the bakery, displaying a real-time account on television to keep management and staff constantly aware of consumption levels.

Mr Plarre said the results pointed to a future where, the larger the company became, the more it could rationalise and control energy and resource use to lower its environmental footprint, turning the traditional expansion versus consumption equation on its head.

"(Our example) has shown that getting bigger doesn't necessarily mean getting dirtier, in fact it can mean getting a lot cleaner," Mr Plarre said.



The dough should rise for Ralph Plarre.

As for how much all this costs to achieve, and how much the bakery is saving in real dollar terms as a result, the company isn't willing to go public just yet.

"Let's just say that from a pure accounting point of view the

return is not great, although that may change as energy and resource prices become more and more expensive," Mr Plarre said.

"We're doing this because we are a family business that's committed to taking a long-range

approach to sustainability, which is something that public companies often can't afford to do."

Mr Plarre said they had detected a "surge" in sales that was directly attributable to the company's green credentials.

For its green initiatives, Ferguson Plarre has been nominated for a 2008 Banksia Environmental Foundation Award.

**LINK**

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