

FOR THOUSANDS OF FRESH JOBS AND EXPERT ADVICE, GO TO C

Benefits in going green now

Business should shore up talent for a greener and more responsible world, writes Katherine Hartmann

IT'S an interesting world we live in, a world where environmental concerns, once only championed by hard-left environmentalists, have come to the fore. As Australian industry — private and public sector — sits on the precipice of an environmentally inspired overhaul, we watch and wait, a little unsure of what the future holds.

With experts tipping Australia to follow the US and UK trends of growth in the green skills sectors, a lot of people have been left scratching their heads wondering what 'green skills' actually are. The head scratching is not helped by the Government's lack of definition of green skills in the July-issued green paper.

Pierre Malou, manager, environment and sustainability at Drake Executive, says green skills — or green collar — careers in laymen's terms are "the skills that help businesses fund, plan and manage everything to do with helping the company meet corporate or social responsibility around climate change."

Passively waiting for the implementation of an emissions trading scheme in 2010 may not be the only way forward. "Ahead of the carbon trading scheme businesses can act on taxes, thereby making major companies energy-efficient in the future," he says.

According to the CSIRO study, Growing the Green Collar Economy, sectors with traditionally high environment impacts such as transport, agriculture, construction, mining and manufacturing will still see strong growth with a predicted 230,000 to 340,000 new jobs in the next 10 years — that's in addition to normal employment turnover.

A predicted hike in costs for industries offsetting emissions has also caused widespread concern about potential moves to

offshore production, resulting in outgoing investment. If those fears are realised all this talk of job creation will have been for naught. Should Australia maintain local production?

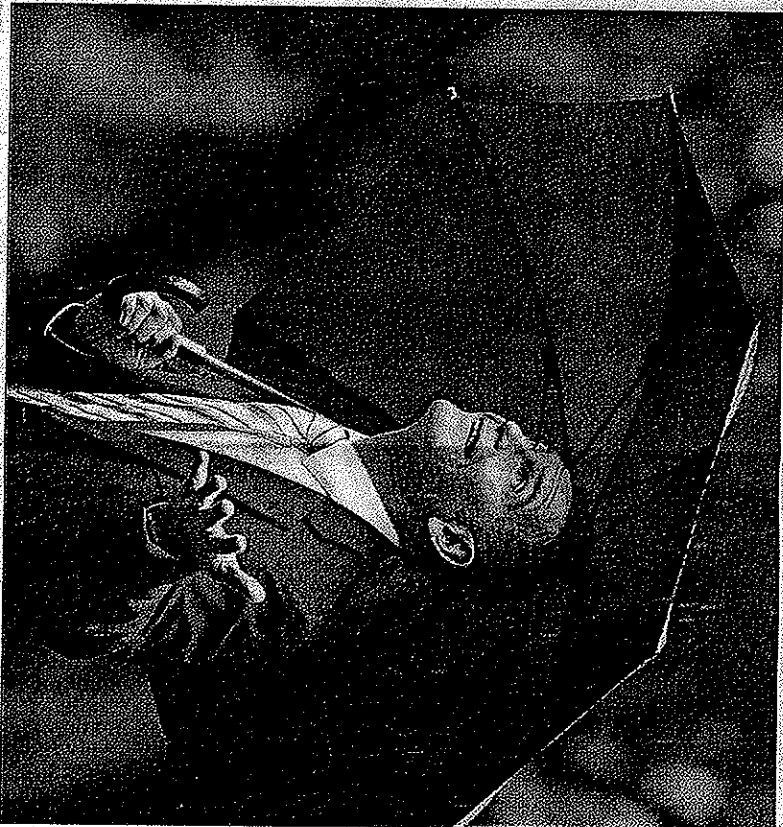
According to Martin Parkinson, secretary of the Department of Climate Change, (created by the Rudd Government following the 2007 election), implementing emissions reductions could result in positive growth in three ways: ■ Via an increased demand for people with the skills to help ensure our economy and industries continue to grow in a carbon-constrained world.

■ Through increased demand for employees with the skills needed to maintain the forecast renewable industries as they develop — solar, wind, wave and geothermal, for example.

■ Lastly, Parkinson predicts, within existing businesses, which will require engineers, project managers, corporate finance experts, innovation managers, compliance specialists, greenhouse gas emissions audit experts and the like.

It is in this last group that synchronisation becomes imperative. For the most part, existing employees will simply extend their skills to cater for dealing with green elements, such as the innovations manager who is now also responsible for developing strategic business developments in sustainable areas. According to Parkinson, adaptation comes from gaining an understanding of the skill mix required.

Parkinson says, "What's important is having people who are well-trained to be flexible and innovative. Firms are going to have lots of opportunities [in growth] and the ones that are able to identify those opportunities and go for them will be the big winners." As far as the vocational training and skill



Don't wait: Pierre Malou says not all 'green' jobs will be new. Picture: Jane Dempster

sets needed for employees after 2010, Parkinson says that professional qualifications in terms of what sort of a degree or certificate employees complete will not differ. He says changes will occur more at the micro level. There is no doubt that greening our workforce will require big investments of both

skills and money. We already have a skills shortage in this country: where will the money and training come from? According to Oona Nielsen, executive director, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, there is a desire across all sectors of industry to devise

solutions from within. This sink-or-swim mentality has seen many sectors looking to create life-rifits in the form of green innovation, rather than waiting for government bodies to devise appropriate schemes and solutions.

One example of self-assistance at a grass-roots level are green apprenticeships and training programs such as those funded by the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council. These training packages allow businesses the resources they need to vocationally educate and skill new workers for many of the anticipated future environmental needs. Green apprenticeships have become common in manufacturing and production. It is these sectors that are slated to bear the greatest impact from any emissions trading scheme.

Malou shares Nielsen's prediction. He also stresses the importance of companies beginning now to make themselves energy-efficient. The introduction of green jobs is imperative. Although many anticipate the need to introduce environmentally specific skilled positions, Malou says that demand will also cross into existing roles. "Because [businesses] will have to pay for carbon emission, jobs that deal with auditing and accounting and the like will be in high demand."

So then, how exactly are we to deal with these changes to our environment and also to our industry at large?

Parkinson believes adaptation is a solution. "Even if we were able to stop all emissions worldwide tomorrow, you'd still get some ongoing increase in temperature — so adaptation is really important. It's the area that in many ways has been under-invested in."

Some experts refuse to put a dollar value on the potential cost of implementing an emissions trading scheme, but others estimate the potential losses to the states and territories as near the \$1.4 billion mark.

Technology gives an advantage, but Gen Y lacks real-world experience

Padma Iyer

thirds of the respondents believe young respectful of their environment and their young employees brought fresh ideas to the