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How the Melbourne Cricket Club is ensuring the MCG is a leader in environmental sustainability

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The MCG hosts dozens of sporting events each year, with the likes of footballers and cricketers competing on the ultimate stage for sporting glory. But, on the environmental sustainability front, the mentality is not about competition, but rather about playing for the same team.

In fact, the environmental journey of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), which operates Australia’s biggest and most renowned stadium, the MCG, started over a decade ago. Peter Wearne, MCC General Manager - Facilities, says this journey has focused on the MCG being perceived as more than just a sporting venue. “It is a venue that can operate with environmental consciousness and have a positive effect on the community,” he says. The organisation has not only aimed at being a leader in the sports, events and entertainment sector, but also strived to become an industry leader in environmental sustainability.

SHIFTING FOCUS

Wearne explains that there was no major tipping point for the club shifting its focus onto more sustainable practices. However, he says that the MCC building an **Environmental Management System** back in 2015, set the wheels in motion to invest in new programs and initiatives. The most notable example is the \$20 million investment in a **Water Recycling Facility**, completed in 2012, as a direct response to the MCG being named one of Melbourne’s top 100 water users in previous years.

Procurement has also been front of mind, with the MCC placing a weighting on environmental sustainability from suppliers and products in tender submissions. Factors considered include reviewing the environmental background of the supplier; assessing the end-of-life plan for any materials; understanding the supply chain of any products; and reviewing how products are manufactured. This procurement policy has in turn encouraged existing and future suppliers, contractors and stakeholders to review their own business practices and implement more sustainable ones.

REDUCING WASTE

In a normal year, the venue welcomes approximately 3.5 million people through the turnstiles, which naturally leads to a high volume of waste. This led the club to grow its **recycling streams** and policies, implementing a new system with 26 streams in the back-of-house areas. In 2013, the venue recycled 61% of waste and that number climbed to 78% in 2019.

Investing in an **Organics Dehydrator** has not only led to more sustainable outcomes but has also proven to be financially beneficial for the club. The machine takes all types of organic waste, dehydrates it at approximately 150 degrees for 8.5 hours, reduces the volume by approximately 80% and creates what is known as *soilfood*. This soilfood is mixed with sand and applied as a top dressing to Yarra Park – heritage listed parkland which the MCC also oversees. Venues, both domestically and internationally, have followed the MCC’s lead in investing in an **Organics Dehydrator**.



“It is a venue that can operate with environmental consciousness and have a positive effect on the community.”

PETER WEARNE,
MCC General
Manager - Facilities



3.5M

FANS PER YEAR VISIT THE MCG





ENERGY EFFICIENCY

The stadium is due to complete its second **Energy Performance Contract (EPC)** in December 2020, with investments in LED lighting solutions and air cooling systems, as well as upgrades to the Building Monitoring System. EPC2 is expected to deliver the MCG with a 12% reduction in emissions, building on the 19% reduction already achieved from EPC1.

Separately, the recent LED upgrade to the iconic MCG light towers and infill lighting has resulted in a 50% reduction in electricity consumption.

CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

New projects and initiatives haven't just been limited to large infrastructure

campaigns. In 2019, the venue installed 14 new **water stations** for patrons, taking the total to 28, and further encouraged attendees to use the bubblers and bring a reusable water bottle. The venue has also championed the **community connection** it has with its patrons, through content displayed on the screens inside the ground during games, even featuring Melbourne Stars cricketers to spread the message. Wearne says, "connecting with the community is important, as we can help create a positive behavioural change".

SETTING NEW GOALS

While the club has enjoyed considerable success with its new projects and initiatives recently, it hasn't rested on its laurels. A new **Sustainability Plan**

is currently in the works, which will be implemented alongside the new MCC Strategy and define its objectives for the next three to four years. This includes setting goals around its carbon footprint, as well as research into renewable energy options.

Collaboration and information-sharing have been fundamental to the club's sustainability plans, with the MCC opening its doors to other venues from around Australia and internationally, to showcase their projects. Wearne says it's important to "not only learn from other organisation's mistakes, but also from their wins".

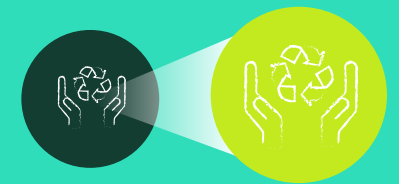
When asked about giving advice to those in the industry, Wearne says it's important to "make a commitment" to what's important to your organisation. He also stressed that initiatives and projects don't have to be large scale, but it's important to effectively communicate with members, fans and consumers.

Wearne encourages organisations to commit to the **United Nations Sports for Climate Action Initiative**, which outlines five principles that guide sporting organisations on strategies, policies and procedures to become more sustainable.

The MCG has long been known as Australia's greatest stadium, and as a Melbourne icon. It's time to start recognising its leadership in sustainability.

The Melbourne Cricket Club is a foundation Sports Environment Alliance Member and a signatory to the United Nations Sports for Climate Action Initiative.

MCG sustainability efforts



61% > **78%**
OF WASTE RECYCLED IN 2013 OF WASTE RECYCLED IN 2019

30%

REDUCTION IN GHG EMISSIONS THROUGH TWO ENERGY PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS UPGRADES



50%

REDUCTION IN ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION THROUGH LIGHTING UPGRADES



80%

REDUCTION IN VOLUME OF ORGANIC WASTE

