

Protecting tomorrow, today

David Finn joined Kyocera Mita in 1996. A keen diver, camper and all-round lover of the Australian bush, it was an easy step for him to understand the value of taking care of the physical environment, of remembering the land outside our cities.

"I've always had an interest in the environment, although I couldn't be categorised as a greenie or anything," he said. "I've always gone camping with my kids and enjoyed the magic of being out there and preserving nature."

Finn had joined a company that had already started raising its environmental consciousness at a global level. But it was Finn who became instrumental in the push for environmentally sound strategy, developments and thinking in the Australian branch.

"In 1996 nobody thought much about climate change but I did begin to change the company's view from about 1999," Finn recalled.

In those early days, Finn – as Kyocera managing director in Australia – started talking to the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) with a view to supporting that organisation. But Finn alleged he found the ACF "too political" and shied away from forming too close an involvement.

"I was on a mission then to find someone to hook up with and develop our capabilities," he said. "And in about 2000 we got involved with Clean Up Australia – we've been involved with them ever since. The symbiosis between our two organisations has been very strong."

Clean Up Australia is a non-profit organisation that aims to foster community involvement in environmental initiatives and campaigns, such as Clean Up Australia, Clean Up The Kimberley and Say No To Plastic Bags. Chairman and founder, Ian Kiernan, met Finn and the two became close friends – to the point where Finn today says he is really Kiernan's environmental protégé.

It is no longer in doubt, Finn said, that human beings have done serious damage to the environment. That damage, he added, could be so serious that we will never recover. What is known for certain, though, is that human beings can alter their behaviour and practices to produce better results. Business, as a major driver of all human activity, can show the way. "There's mounting evidence that there's an issue," Finn said. "By the year 2025-2030, there will be no glaciers in the northern hemisphere. We've got massive volumes of water being displaced."

Finn said there are signs the Greenland ice cap has started melting and might be on its way out. If that happens, estimates suggest global sea levels will rise by seven metres – swamping vast areas of heavily populated coastline including most of the world's largest cities.

"The evidence is all around us that the climate is changing," Finn said, pointing to the increasing prevalence and violence of storms in some areas, desertification in others. Even consequences of a rise in average temperatures of just one degree Celsius – equivalent to the best estimates by the CSIRO for Australia by 2030, relative to 1990 – will have profound and far-reaching effects.

People didn't realise how thin and specific the conditions for human life actually were, Finn said. "If the percentage of CO₂ goes up to one per cent of the atmosphere, that's enough to boil the oceans off," he said. "It's about 0.009 at the moment. People don't get it."

Perhaps green awareness has been a more natural step for Finn because, along with family and friends, he developed the habit at an early age of taking rubbish from the Hawkesbury River or wherever they happened to be enjoying the great outdoors. Reduce, reuse and recycle was something Clean Up Australia promoted, as does Kyocera, as does Finn.

He is happy to have had some level of impact on the IT channel when it comes to



environmental policy. For proof, he pointed to the popularity in the industry of the green tree frog used by Kyocera as an environmental symbol.

Final proof of the pudding is in the eating. So it's something to be able to note, as Finn does, that tenders are starting to come out with environmental criteria written in as non-negotiables.

"We did a tender down in Melbourne and part of the primary requirement was that there was to be no foam packaging and that the tenderer must be signed up to the packaging covenant that stipulates environmentally-friendly packaging," Finn said.

So as well as being 'the right thing to do', environmental responsibility is also becoming a business advantage for those that can demonstrate real credentials.

- FLEUR DOIDGE



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