

Superintendents embrace AGCSA Environmental Management Initiative

Representatives from over 40 golf clubs across three states turned out for the first week of workshops as part of the Australian Golf Course Superintendents' Association's world-leading Environmental Management Initiative.

The interactive workshops, conducted by Terry Muir whose e-par environmental management system (EMS) forms the basis of the initiative, were held in Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide and attracted 45 golf clubs and their respective course superintendents and, in some cases, club managers.

Sixteen Victorian clubs attended the first workshop on Monday, 9 October in Melbourne, including the likes of Royal Melbourne (superintendent Jim Porter), Kingston Heath (superintendent Martin Greenwood) and Metropolitan (superintendent Richard Forsyth). Two days later in Adelaide, 11 clubs from South Australia attended the workshop at Urrbrae College TAFE, while on Thursday, 12 October, 18 clubs attended the Perth workshop.



Terry Muir discusses the e-par EMS with Metropolitan Golf Club superintendent Richard Forsyth at the Melbourne workshop held on Monday 16 October.

"The first week of workshops has been tremendous," says Muir. "I can't say enough about the guys. They have really embraced the initiative and the enthusiasm at each of the workshops has been excellent. These guys are the innovators and early adopters who give an initiative like this the impetus to become a real success.

"And the feedback has been tremendous too. Some have said that they didn't know too much about environmental management systems, but through being a part of the initiative they are now really motivated to improve their environmental management responsibilities which can only be good. We can only hope the rest of the seminars go as well as those in the first week."

The workshops kicked off with a general overview from Muir of the history leading up to the environmental initiative, including a reminder about the 2001 Warringah Golf Club incident which sparked the industry's push to re-evaluate its environmental management principles. From there, attendees were taken through the benefits of having an EMS at their club and pressing upon them an EMS was a progressive and flexible document which demonstrated environmental issues of concern were being addressed and given priority by the club.

Each workshop then went through the computer-based e-par EMS system. E-par is set out like an 18-hole golf course and as users play each hole they gradually build an environmental management system for their course.

Each hole represents an important environmental management element of the ISO 14001 standard for environmental management systems. Each shot the user plays provides them with all the 'how-to' information required to develop their EMS. Each hole has access to templates, sample documents, checklists and advice and throughout the course of the workshops users were able to create:

- Environmental policy statements
- Risk assessments
- Environmental action plans
- Environmental indicators booklet
- Environment manuals
- Standard operating procedures (e.g.: spill response procedures)

After creating these documents users then uploaded them onto the e-par server which they have access anywhere, anytime via a password.



Eleven golf clubs were represented at the Adelaide environmental management initiative workshop at Urrbrae College TAFE

"What I liked about the workshops was that they were informal and really interactive," says Muir. "If the guys had an issue they were able to brainstorm it. Another key area for the guys was finding out how to get information on legislation that pertains to their operations, which has always been an issue.

"One of the most encouraging signs was that the workshops not only attracted superintendents and their assistants, but also general managers and greens committee chairmen. That demonstrates the message is getting across not just to superintendents but others within the golf club management structure of their club's environmental responsibilities which is very encouraging.

"I also fielded calls from the WA and SA DEC units to see how the workshops went which shows that these workshops are being followed with immense interest by such authorities."

AGCSATech manager John Neylan attended the Melbourne and Adelaide workshops and was impressed with the turnout and response from superintendents and their clubs.

"Everything is working extremely well and it was clear the superintendents were getting a lot out of the workshops," says Neylan. "In observing the first couple of

workshops I would see tremendous value in clubs bringing more than one member along to the workshops. Having two members means there is better interaction and more exchange of ideas."

Backing up the success of the workshops has been the number of downloads from the e-par website, a central component of the system, in the first week. According to Muir there have been over 500 downloads of environmental documents from the website which is "extremely encouraging". Among the documents downloaded include environmental policy templates, environmental review templates, communications matrix templates, environmental organisation charts and environmental induction handbooks.

The second week of workshops starts on Monday, 16 October in Brisbane, before heading to Sydney on Thursday, 19 October and Hobart on Tuesday, 24 October.

For further information about the AGCSA Environmental Management Initiative, contact John Neylan or Jeff Johnson at the AGCSA (03) 9548 8600 or email info@agcsa.com.au

