

Following is an edited version of a speech presented by CitySwitch national program manager **Esther Bailey**, speaking at this week's National CitySwitch Awards in Sydney.

Thank you Lord Mayor. And may I take the opportunity to say what an **absolute privilege** it is to work for such a visionary, inspirational female leader.

And I'm sure you will all join me in a big shout out to all the other amazing **council leaders** and our CitySwitch **program managers** around the country who really are the **powerhouse** behind this program. It's a pleasure to work so collaboratively with **likeminded Cities** across the country and to have such awesome work **colleagues**. Thank you for everything that you do.

The theme this year is "**unleash your inner warrior**".

This theme is in recognition that in 2017, sustainability is neither fringe, nor niche, or indeed even optional, and that, despite our usually demure demeanour, we are an amazing army of cube-farm warriors standing up for a better **future**, a better **planet** and **justice** for all!

We all understand that transforming our economy with **prosperity** and opportunity **for the many**, is a mammoth task. Every decision we each make matters. And the next few years are **crucial** to turning this giant ship around

Every year we talk about **growth** in the program. Usually we talk about it in terms of square metres of **space**, but maybe we should be talking about it in terms of **people**.

The organisations in our program represent about **1 million** Australian workers who each work for organisations that have **committed** to environmental leadership. Now let's say that each one of those employees makes an average of 3 procurements of \$10,000 a year. That modest assumption leads us to \$30 billion of spend. **Let that sink in \$30 billion** dollars of money spent each year in our economy that could go to companies doing less bad or more good.

Now, of course you'll still need **pens**, or **concrete**, or **consulting** services, or office **chairs** or **sandwiches**

And you'll still **balance** the sustainability credentials in the tender process against **value** for money, **quality**, **aesthetics** and more.

But \$30 billion dollars in your **collective hands** is an awful lot of incentive for the business community to make better products and services to meet this demand.

And that is before we even consider the impact of every business demanding a 4 star or above **NABERS base** building and great lighting (..and a free fitout, ..and great end of trip facilities...and a wellness program...).

But, my point is not just about **economic** influence, it's about density of ecosystem. It's about a **richness** of personal and professional connections and positive **feedback loops**.

I'm a social scientist and I just love how synapses in the brain connect to their neighbours and make connections in apparently up to 11 different dimensions. I think there are lots of **analogies** to a sustainability network like ours (not just CitySwitch, I mean our whole industry). The more we connect and create different kinds of **ideas and responses**, the more **innovative and resilient** our thinking becomes.

There's a lot of talk about smart cities around at the moment, but **we** are what makes cities smart. **We** are the creators of the insights that sits over the data. **We** create the vision. We test the hypotheses. **We** are the ones that turn **ideas** into real life.

You, are a leadership network with an **embarrassment of talent, terrific depth of field**. Look at the person sat next to you. **I bet they're awesome**. We have critical mass, at the corporate level, nationally, locally and internationally. We have public consensus on our side.

And that density and commitment is creating positive feedback loops. We are seeing more **professional opportunities** in our chosen field, stronger environmental **policy commitments to divestment**. We are seeing sustainability move to the corporate strategy level and be associated with **core brand values**.

More than half of the workforce will consist of millennials by 2020, three out of four millennials accept that climate change is a fact and 87 percent of them measure the success of a company based on standards that extend beyond financial measures to include social and environmental performance.

We know that millennials have high expectations of their workplace amenity and we are seeing our offices become more people centric as a result of this culture shift.

Last year we talked about the amount of progress that we had made and how, despite some of the overt signs, **we were winning**.

Well just in case you haven't stopped to **smell the roses** I just thought I'd take the chance to do a quick round up of some the cool things that have happened this year:

- More than **20 countries at this year's UN COP23 Conference united in a "Powering Past Coal Alliance,"**
- Australia's dirtiest coal plant, Hazlewood, closed down
- China prepared to launch the world's largest carbon market
- City of Melbourne finalised an aggregated power purchase agreement with 14 partners for a 80MW wind farm in regional Victoria
- The Australian Government launched the National **Carbon Offset Standard** for Buildings and precincts.
- Australia's chief scientist Dr **Alan Finkel** recommended 50 strategies to improve the reliability and affordability of the national energy market, and the government has agreed to adopt 49 of these recommendations
- We piloted a new NABERS **Co-Assess** tool that could open up thousands of additional tenant ratings and new collaboration models inside our buildings
- Elon Musk is days away from completing his 100MW battery storage project in South Australia which will be the largest lithium ion battery storage installation in the world
- Victoria announced a 150 MW **Solar Thermal** Plant to be built in the old coal town of Port Augusta.
- Our friends from Adelaide launched the fabulous **Carbon Neutral Adelaide** program, in partnership with its state government
- After 4 years of development involving experts from 52 countries we now have an **international** standard for sustainable procurement,
- A global task force set up by the G20, has developed a framework for climate-related risk disclosure, which is already supported by more than 1000 companies with \$11 trillion dollars of assets.

- And Bloomberg's New Energy Outlook 2017 predicted renewables will make up three quarters of the world's electricity supply by 2040.

So what are the key themes and issues that are emerging at the moment for you guys?

Well, **net zero** has been a hot topic this year.

City of Sydney held a business leadership workshop this April which many of last year's CitySwitch award winners attended

Amongst the 50 companies attending **34** were already exploring or committed to net zero. And I have to say, **just quietly**, that we are hoping you guys will also be joining them, and taking a leading role to **demonstrate** those pathways to others. Your customers expect it.

In case you still haven't quite landed what all this chatter means for you: it means more renewable energy (**onsite** and **offsite**), more **offsets** for non-energy related emissions and (if you're smart about it) more greening of your **supply chain** and office accommodation.

Rising energy costs also put energy efficiency back in the **box seat** for savings in the year ahead so it's a great time to dust off your **old business cases** and push down those unnecessary expenses for good.

Whilst net zero work will take a little longer to permeate fully into the business as usual mindset, there is no doubt that it will inspire new kinds of business models and collaborations. Of course, CitySwitch stands ready to support, facilitate and assist you in reaching out beyond your boundaries and activate building communities towards our common goal.

ASBEC this year reported that the built environment represents 25% of the Australia's emissions¹. And we have the **technology**, the **will power** and the **intellectual nous** to take it to zero. Let's not be afraid of our power to lead, lets just **roll up our sleeves** and **get on with it** as we always have.

So how are you collectively progressing along this path?

This year you have abated **600,000** tonnes of CO2 through carbon offsets and renewables

This is **twice as much** as last year- and it looks like this. But next year, we need a bubble this big over all of our cities!

These 15 members are NCOS accredited.

AMP, Investa, GPT, Lendlease Barangaroo and Mirvac have all committed provide net zero office space – so when you are choosing your next office, you know who to go to!

First State Super has invested in large-scale solar power generation in the Philippines and Thailand, and wind farms and hydro power in India.

Commonwealth Bank has rolled out solar across 38 sites nationwide with 554 KW of installed capacity

Action Aid installed onsite solar this year at their Camperdown office.

¹ ASBEC second plank?

NSW OEH installed onsite solar in regional areas, saving 723 MWh on their previous years' energy bill.

It's also been a real delight this year to see the UN sustainable development goals emerging strongly into the sustainability conversation.

As WELLness paved the way for a people centric conversation for those **inside** our buildings, and for considering the whole person, so the SDGs give us **permission** and **responsibility** to consider people **outside** of our offices in the broader community. As Sharan Burrows from the international BTeam told us this year "its not a **just** transition, if we leave people behind". Resilience is a **soft skill** that our communities and customers will be looking to us for in the years ahead. And we will be bringing those considerations inside the resources that we provide you in the coming year

A nice example from this year is Mirvac who have been working with Mates on the Move, a social enterprise that provides training and **employment pathways** for men and women exiting correctional centres. They have been providing a service, collecting used coffee cups and paper towels. This work is providing jobs and turning lives around. So far, it has also diverted **41 tonnes** of **paper** based waste from 5 sites. Kim Host is looking to expand this program if anyone is interested see her for a chat over drinks later.

Waste

Of course waste continued to be a big focus this year for all.

Our Choose. Reuse avoidance campaign was a **big hit**. Its templates and toolkits give you a ready to go campaign that you can roll out in your business or building. Members have used this engagement strategy to open a broader conversation about corporate values, and emphasise that **companies who care, take care** of the details (that includes not turning up to meetings with a piece of instant landfill in their hand!)

Members also appreciated that this was a shared nationwide campaign, conveniently and **fabulously amplified** by our friend Craig here, for which we are extremely **grateful**.

80 buildings and businesses nationally took up our choose.reuse campaign in the first 6 months and it seems it has a lots more life in it yet.

GPT collected dirty used coffee cups lids from their building and commissioned an artist Marine Debris (who I believe is here with us this evening. **Bravo**) to create a piece of work to engage audiences and focus attention on the vast amounts of disposable cups that were used in their building. They then backed this up with KeepCup offers to instill the new behavioural culture

Arup did a bit of social research before launching their campaign that told them staff didn't want to use reusable coffee cups because they didn't like the maintenance and effort of carrying them around and cleaning them. So they instituted a **borrow cup** system which is now being rolled out through 8 offices across Australia and have also started providing reusable containers for takeaway lunches!

Your submissions this year show lots of members pushing out beyond the **three bin** system, and asking tougher questions of their building owners and contractors about where their waste goes

Holden Street Community Centre in Victoria has transformed into a small recycling hub, having registered with Terracycle to recycle toothpaste tubes and toothbrushes. They also

take batteries, corks, mobile phones, small e-waste, soft plastics and have a compost worm farm.

At Perth Energy, A soft plastics recycling scheme was fostered a more general cultural shift in which staff now positively reinforce recycling behaviours and negatively reinforce landfill waste generation.

Newscorp ran their annual impressive recycling week event, inviting reuse and recycling vendors to a pop up market place for staff to get excited about the circular economy.

All amazingly cool projects.

Don't forget, these campaigns work best when each builds on the momentum of the previous, so make sure you know where you are going with your next call to action.

In the **coming year**, look out for, and make sure that you support the roll out of the new NABERS waste tool for base buildings and if you want to try and crack down on the kind of nefarious waste practices highlighted in the War on Waste, demand that your building use a Good Environmental Choice Australia certified waste contractor.

The NSW container deposit scheme has arrived and we think this can create some exciting new opportunities for charitable giving programs in the office.

Policy

At a corporate policy level, Bupa launched a Healthy Planet Sustainability Plan that sets a commitment to build sustainable, future-proof communities that support the health of people and customers in a time of demanding population growth and an aging demographic.

AECOM, has adopted the ISO14001 environmental standard over the past six months and expanded their Green Office Program to a Greening their Operations Program, including developing a global sustainable procurement policy.

And GECA has launched its new positive procurement pledge, and we encourage you to check it out. Sustainable procurement just got a whole lot easier with a new ISO standard to guide you through the whole process.

New workplaces

And we are still seeing how new ways of working are putting the needs of people first and delivering massive energy and space savings

EML moved to this beautiful new 5.5 star space from their old 3 star tenancies. Adding open spaces and a heap of smart zoning and sensors. And are saving 110 tonnes of carbon a year as a result.

Cushman and Wakefield combined two Melbourne offices to Bourke Street in a sustainability retrofit that resulted in energy savings and a 20% improvement in indoor environment quality and 32% improvement in health and wellbeing indicators.

REA Group opened a new showroom space with the inclusion of an open courtyard and plant walls. They rebalanced their entire HVAC system and launched a suite of health initiatives for staff.

Overall our judges were impressed with the calibre and spread of projects this year.

They said “We are seeing a genuinely people-centric shift in the way that projects are designed and engaging participants. There is a strong appreciation that energy efficiency, occupant comfort, technology and social outcomes can all be mutually supportive.”

Personally, I am thrilled with the **diversity** and **ambition** on the projects we see, and to return to my earlier theme, by their ever-increasing sophistication and whole of business impact. Framing sustainability projects with a **human-centred lens** opens up new approaches for **collective action and impact**. And by sharing our successes – and failures through a **supportive network** like ours, we get to be a bit **savvier** each time to try

So, how does this effort roll up into a picture of our collective achievements in 2017?

You reported 1500 projects across these diverse categories this year.

Despite, not all of this being directly emissions focused, we still delivered a strong performance again this year with almost **60,000** tonnes of emissions reduction from energy efficiency alone. That’s **\$15 million dollar** energy cost saving – which will probably be worth twice as much next year!

This year these **17** organisations achieved the highest available rating of 6 star. Quick round of applause for this magnificent achievement

And all of these guys achieved their target 4 star rating. That’s 241 tenancies if you include the indicative ratings. Another round of applause please Net zero is a **short leap** for you guys. We hope you take it in the coming year.

Our numbers continue to grow solidly. Whilst your efficient consolidated tenancies impacted our net growth numbers, we are pleased to welcome to our **33** new signatories in 2017.

It’s good to have you all on the team

Remember, whatever you choose to focus on this year, we’ve got resources to support your decision making. Whether your priority is selecting **onsite solar**, considering a **power purchase** agreement, exploring an **IEQ** rating, engaging your building to move as a **community**, rethinking your **IT** or prioritising your projects by **carbon impact**, our resource hub has tools, information and support for your business, to help you move **quicker, better and smarter**

In the coming year we will be focusing on:

- New campaign toolkits
- Whole building activations
- Advocacy on mandatory disclosure
- General acceleration in services, quality, **and frankly**, our expectations of you!

I meant **everything** that I said this evening. I am very proud to be a part of an awesome and talented army of principled, peaceful, positive change warriors. Your efforts inspire and catalyse. The nature of sustainability is that we don’t always get there the first time we try, sometimes not the second or third; but then one day, when conditions are right, all of those tenacious efforts and preparation just drop into place. So **feel the power** people and **feel the love**.

We got this!