

GET INTO WIDE FORMAT WITH DES AND ROLAND  
 "YOU TRUST US WITH YOUR COLOUR"  
 NOW TRUST US WITH YOUR SIGN & DISPLAY SOLUTION"



Printing news and information for Australia & New Zealand

news

shop

employment

trade services

Print21



Search

## Latest News

PRINT

latest news

packaging

labels

wide-format

Supported by



## Twitter Feed

A pathway to failure – Alan King on OnDemand. There are some intractable problems facing the industry . This is one. <http://t.co/Tjh6xANmqD>

Michael Wu wins the battle for OnDemand – Plenty of disappointed printers in Melbourne over missing out <http://t.co/IXv3PtckzF>

Starleaton expands with Zund agency takeover | Print21 Ben Eaton is on the takeover track. <http://t.co/GRTavWVg6C> via @sharethis

Joan Grace quits Printing Industries & Future Print –

### LIA carbon debate heats up the industry

Tuesday, 01 March 2011

By Print21

Beset by different carbon schemes, industry sage, James Cryer, piles back into the debate, debunking accepted truths while sowing confusion in the minds of the undecided.

Last week's LIA meeting at Five Dock in Sydney dealt with the merits of alternate carbon-abatement schemes. It highlighted several things. One is just how gullible human beings are to any new quick-fix scheme. Another is how comical it is to see otherwise intelligent people attempt to reduce the whole complex issue of climate change and carbon emissions down to simplistic devices such as the 'carbon calculator'.



Then again, with our fixation on carbon, we're probably chasing the wrong culprit anyway.

But let me backtrack. Humans seem to only want two alternatives. We only see two possibilities for almost everything; republic or monarchy; labor or liberal; tea or coffee? To every problem there seems only two choices!

And so it is with the challenge of pollution.

We're served up two choices: a trading scheme, which limits the quantity of emissions but allows the price to fluctuate; or the so-called carbon tax, which imposes a price it hopes will reduce the quantity of emissions. Both are Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee; a misguided approach based on a false premise. Apart from that they're perfectly appropriate!

At the LIA meeting, Phil Lawrence, our well-known environmentalist, trod a delicate path between the two proposed systems and managed to deliver a relatively value-free appraisal of both. While interesting, I suspect it's all a bit academic, as any carbon tax will be the subject of such vigorous lobbying that the compensation payments to such affected industries as coal, steel, LNG, aluminium, cement, etc will far exceed any benefits.

One of Phil's points was that all activities generate some carbon footprint, no matter how negligible and the practice of polluting then buying offsets is frowned upon. It doesn't reduce net pollution; it just rearranges the deck chairs.

So how come a major local paper-supplier is advertising one of its products as having had *Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)* ... and is now *carbon neutral*? It claims to have undertaken a cradle-to-grave analysis of the entire greenhouse emissions related to its production ... as well as emissions associated with other stages of its production. So we assume they interviewed the Russian lumberjacks as to whether the vodka they drank for breakfast came from sustainable potato farms! Yeah, right.

This example illustrates how easy it is to dial up the assessment program that gives you the outcome you're hoping for. With at least six to pick from you've got plenty of choices!

#### Getting into the carbon calculations

The other speaker was Chris Sewell of Gaia Partnership, who made the point that it is possible to reduce



Read the latest issue of Print21 magazine

Subscribe for your print copy



ADD THE PERFECT TOUCH

Click for SCODIX Options

GET INTO WIDE FORMAT WITH DES AND ROLAND

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FUJIFILM GRAPHICS BLOG & BE ENTERED FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN AN Instax Mini 50S Camera with Film!

Trade Service of the week

Job of the week

Apprenticeships

everything to numbers. Much like alchemists believe they can transmute lead to gold, or psychologists believe they can deconstruct personality-types into neat little boxes, so we're led to believe we can actually measure the carbon atoms produced by any print job.

But how reliable is such a carbon calculator? With at least six different carbon-emission accreditation systems, it appears you can take your pick as to which one makes you look good! Accepting for a moment the sincerity of the concept, it begs at least four questions that remained un-answered during the presentation.

First: who can test the accuracy of this calculator when gaseous emissions, are by their very nature, hard to quantify? We can't even get financial auditors to agree – and they're counting something you can see – money!

Second: I suggest the difference in pollution emissions between the best and the worst printers is miniscule. After all, we all use the same ink, paper and presses. It's not like one printer is twice as bad as another.

Third: how far do you go in bringing to account various activities in, say, the manufacture of paper? Already we have the three Scope levels, which create an administrative nightmare. Scope 1 are impacts directly related to your own print or paper production; Scope 2 deals with your suppliers and your admin/sales activities (do your reps drive Prius' – or not?); Scope 3 refers to third-parties such as the suppliers to your suppliers and what they had for breakfast – see Russian lumberjacks, above. The whole world's going mad!

Fourth – this is the killer-punch. Let's assume our carbon-calculator has, by some miracle, been able to accurately take all those factors into account and come up with a number. All it has done is recognise the upstream activities. It hasn't and can't anticipate how environmentally friendly the purpose of the printed material was. Say, for example, it scored highly in terms of its eco-friendly production process but was actually junk mail that clogged up peoples' letterboxes? Or telephone books, which were never read.

Needless to say, our calculator would not be able to take into account all these variables. Such calculators are indicative of our desire to reduce even the most complex issues down to a set of numbers, like the attempts to measure schools' performance.

Forget trying to measure emissions. The real solution lies in us recognizing the real culprits – pollution, not carbon – and correctly pricing the cost of petrol, water and coal-fired electricity. That way individuals and companies would find ways of reducing pollution tomorrow, without the massive bureaucracy the touted schemes involve.

The LIA meeting was very thought provoking, which raised some interesting issues and questions, most of which remained unanswered due to the inherently vague nature of the whole issue. Ironically, the big polluters may be the ultimate beneficiaries, as they line up to club any proposed scheme to death.

James Cryer,  
JDA Print Recruitment.  
March, 2011

**The industry can't afford to lose talent such as Joan Grace**  
[.http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC](http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC)

Colin Longbottom heads towards the exit Good man Colin, hope your saddlebags are well loaded for the sunset ride.<http://t.co/d5oamorf2X>

If you enjoyed reading this article [Subscribe to the FREE Print21 news bulletin](#)

## Comment on this article

Name

E-Mail (will not be published)

Website

Receive comment notifications?

Comment

To receive notification of comments made to this article, you can also provide your email address below.

Email address

