

No ties in the Japanese workplace - an energy efficiency measure

Alison Rowe of Fujitsu comments on Japan's business response to climate change

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In business offices around Japan, executives are not wearing ties. The historically conservative country has through a government-sponsored scheme known as "Cool Biz" adopted a policy that allows workers to wear casual attire as a means to be more comfortable in the workplace and therefore reduce the need for air conditioning, and the electricity required to drive it.

The behaviour change has taken on an even greater sense of urgency due to the potential of summer power outages following the March earthquake and nuclear generator accident. But, as Alison Rowe, Global Executive Head for Sustainability at Fujitsu, says, this is a very Japanese response. "Japanese believe in the community and will voluntarily do what is necessary to address a community concern or goal," said Ms Rowe.

Speaking this morning at the *7th Australia-New Zealand Climate Change & Business Conference*, Ms Rowe outlined Japan's policy response to climate change and the impact this has on business.

Japan has taken leading action on climate change, committing to reduce emissions by 25% by 2020 and indicating an intention to start an emissions trading scheme. This commitment remains, despite the major nuclear accident and the resulting economic and energy supply impact acknowledging a major review of energy policy is underway.

Ms Rowe said business has actively cooperated in the moves by the government, viewing the climate change initiatives as guidelines to a voluntary response. "In Japan, you don't have to develop a new business case for sustainability, per se, as sustainability is an inbuilt part of business operations, values and the community," said Ms. Rowe. "Initiatives to reduce emissions and improve efficiency are part of our day to day operations."

Japan tends to have a very long term planning horizon which takes into account some of the more difficult issues like climate change. "Many Japanese companies, including Fujitsu, have a long-term approach. Fujitsu's environmental sustainability policy is out to 2100," explained Ms Rowe. "This makes it easier to deal with issues such as climate change that have such a long time horizon to realise benefits of investment and changed behaviour".

Ms Rowe was speaking at the Climate Change & Business Conference which continues in Wellington today. The event hosts more than 300 delegates with approximately 70 business and policy experts presenting on implications of climate change and best practice response.

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