



## ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

The way we live in today's society impacts upon the environment. Everyone can make a difference by minimising the amount of resources consumed, and the amount of waste produced. The condition of our land, the purity of our waterways and the quality of the air we breathe are all important factors in our lives. The health of the environment is a gift we leave for future generations.

At **Somewhere Unique**, we recognise that caring for the environment is directly linked to caring for the overall needs of our guests and the community. We accept the challenge to integrate environmental considerations into all relevant aspects of our business. We recognise that it is just as important to care for the environment today, as it is to ensure we continually improve our environmental performance for the future.

**Somewhere Unique** consists of two one-bedroom self-contained retreats. They are set on a private 20-acre bushland property in the NSW Hunter Valley, taking full advantage of the tranquil setting, natural ventilation, and proximity to native flora and fauna. Our business was the **first accommodation property** in Hunter Valley Wine Country to achieve **EcoTourism certification** through EcoTourism Australia. We regularly monitor our carbon footprint, and work to reduce the amount of energy consumed on the property. At the end of each financial year we **measure and offset via Greenfleet the greenhouse gas emissions** generated by our business activities including; LPG, electricity, business vehicle use, and off-site waste disposal.

We strive to educate our guests and help them to understand and appreciate the natural environment in which we live.

## How can you help?

- ✓ Breathe fresh air. Open your windows and give the air-conditioning a rest. Make use of the blinds and ceiling fans to maximise the efficiency of the building design.
- ✓ Choose the right bin – please place recyclable items into the bins provided. This includes glass, PET, paper, cardboard, and compostable materials.
- ✓ Don't forget to turn off lights, air-conditioning, heaters and other appliances when you leave the retreat.



## Environmental Programs and Accreditation

- ✓ In March 2008, Somewhere Unique was independently assessed by **AAA Tourism / NRMA** and has achieved **Eco-Friendly STAR Accreditation** - showing our guests we are responsible and committed to reducing the environmental impact of our business. To be awarded Eco-Friendly STAR our property must achieve adequate points against a set of practical environmental criteria, including: energy efficiency, waste minimisation, and water management.



- ✓ In June 2008, Somewhere Unique was **EcoCertified** by Ecotourism Australia, being granted Nature Tourism Accreditation. The definition of **Nature Tourism** is: "Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas". The retreats at Somewhere Unique aim to provide opportunities for guests to experience nature in ways that lead to a greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the surrounding environment. One way this is achieved is by having many large windows, and easily accessible outdoor areas that allow our guests to directly experience the surrounding environment. Information on the local flora and fauna is also provided in each retreat.



- ✓ In March 2009, Somewhere Unique was granted **Climate Action Innovator** certification via the **Climate Action Certification Program**. This level of certification is for businesses who have undertaken a set of adaption and emissions reduction and are auditing and measuring their carbon footprint.



- ✓ In September 2014, Somewhere Unique officially became a **Greenfleet Promotion Supporter**. For all guests who book online we include a \$2 donation to Greenfleet, which for most guests offsets their car travel to and from Wollombi. Last year 80% of our guests participated in this promotion.





## Energy Efficiency

- ✓ In **March 2011**, Solar Switch installed a **3 kilowatt solar electricity system** on the roof of our house (at the top of the hill behind the retreats). Solar Power is the cleanest, most viable form of renewable energy available. These panels convert sunlight into solar electricity, which is fed back into the grid and reduces the need for coal generated electricity. The panels produce around **50% of the energy needs** of Lowanna and Allawah Retreats.



- ✓ The **remaining 50% of our electricity usage is offset via the purchase of PureEnergy** from Energy Australia - they offer consumers a choice between conventional coal-generated energy and electricity generated from clean, renewable and non-polluting sources, including the sun, wind and hydro. By choosing PureEnergy, Energy Australia ensures that an amount equivalent to 50% of our electricity consumption has been or will be generated by accredited GreenPower Generators using renewable energy sources and delivered to the national electricity grid.



- ✓ Cross-flow air ventilation and ceiling fans reduces the need for constant air-conditioning.
- ✓ Energy efficient light globes have been used where appropriate.
- ✓ The air-conditioning units chosen to keep our guests comfortable utilise inverter technology, making them more energy efficient than conventional air-conditioners. In conjunction, they are 6 star rated. The filters are cleaned regularly to maintain efficiency.



- ✓ We have chosen **instant gas systems** to supply our guests with **hot water** - these units have a 5 star energy rating. They heat as much water as you need, and only when you need it. So there are no heat losses, and you'll never run out of hot water. We **chose gas over electricity**, as gas produces much less of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide than electricity to heat the same amount of water.
- ✓ In March 2011 we reworked the water pipes into each retreat, and the **water is now gravity fed** from tanks higher up the hill. So, less noise pollution, less electricity usage, and on odd occasion when we have a power outage there will still be running water available.

## Water Management

- ✓ Toilets implement **Smart Flush** technology, utilising a 4.5/3L dual flush cistern.
- ✓ High **water saving rating** on all taps and shower heads.
- ✓ As we are on a rural property, we are expected to treat our own waste water on-site – this includes water from such things as showers, toilets and the washing machine. To efficiently treat the waste water created on the property, we chose to use the **Garden Master Bio-Logic System**. In order for the bacteria in the Garden Master system to do their job, it is essential that foreign objects aren't put down the sink or toilet. This includes any types of bleaches or anti-bacterial products. Our **treated waste water** is colourless and odourless, and has been **recycled to provide irrigation to gardens and lawns**. The Garden Master System is pollution free, safe, reliable and economical to operate.
- ✓ As in most country areas, limiting water usage is always a priority. **We use rain water** for all our water needs **at Somewhere Unique**, and have designed the buildings to provide maximum water catchment (that is, a large roof area!) We can currently store over 170,000 litres of water on the property.
- ✓ We use **front-loading washing machines** for our laundry needs.
- ✓ Utilising **drought tolerant native plants** in our landscape design enables us to minimise water requirements on the property.



## Waste Minimisation

- ✓ We **recycle** newspapers, cardboard, glass bottles, PET plastic, steel cans, aluminium cans, and printer cartridges, and **ask our guests to separate these items** from their general waste. It's not difficult to separate these items from our general rubbish – every little bit counts!
- ✓ **Food scraps** at Somewhere Unique are **composted**, using an Aerobin system, which allows us to contribute positively to the environment with aerated composting of house and garden waste, rather than these items being added to landfill.
- ✓ All lawn clippings, prunings from trees, and other green waste are disposed of on the property. On average, 35% of household waste going to landfill in Australia is green waste, so by retaining all this type of waste on the property, we are keeping landfill to a minimum.
- ✓ The use of fertilisers, residual herbicides and pesticides on the property is minimised.

## Design and Construction

- ✓ The retreats at **Somewhere Unique** have been designed using **passive solar architecture** principles. This involves designing buildings to make the best use of the sun's energy.
- ✓ Large **north facing windows** that allow in the low winter sun, and roof overhangs that stop the high summer sun from penetrating.
- ✓ Using **thermal mass** to maximise the benefits of passive solar design, by building on a concrete slab, which can store heat during the day in winter, and re-radiate it at night time.
- ✓ The retreats are **well insulated**, keeping warmth inside in cold weather, and preventing heat from entering when it is hot.
- ✓ The water tanks, roof, internal ceilings, and the majority of the external walls in the retreats are constructed from **Colorbond steel**. This product is thermally efficient and environmentally friendly - steel is one of the world's most recycled products, and all steel made by Bluescope Steel includes recycled steel in its manufacture.



- ✓ **Low-E glass** has been used in the retreats - the special coating on this glass reflects long wave heat radiation back into the rooms during winter, and reflects the heat back outside during summer.
- ✓ The use of **Dulux EnvirO2** paints where possible. This paint range is certified by the Australian Greenhouse Office as 100% greenhouse neutral, and is both low odour and low VOC, creating lower emissions.
- ✓ The timber **flooring** we have chosen to use is **bamboo**. This timber is sustainably sourced, fast growing, rapidly renewable, has very low manufacturing waste, and uses non-toxic water based glues and finishes.
- ✓ Timber **furniture** created for the retreat is built using **ecoSelect hardwood**. This timber is Australian grown, and is sourced from a natural and renewable resource.
- ✓ Many of the fabrics used in our soft furnishings are from **Cloth Fabric**, who work with natural fabrics such as hemp, linen and organic cotton, use water based, nontoxic inks and dyes and have a controllable, low impact approach to manufacturing and materials. The scatter cushions have been filled with corn fibre inserts from **Inneregreen** - these inserts are 100% biodegradable and compostable, and their manufacturing uses 60% less fossil fuels when compared to traditional synthetic polyester fibres.

## Suppliers and Guest Consumables

- ✓ Where appropriate, preference is given to local suppliers and those suppliers and business partners who have proven a commitment to environmental management and climate change initiatives, such as Margan Family Wines.
- ✓ The stationery needs of **Somewhere Unique** are met by a printer utilising recycled paper and card, and environmentally sound printing methods. Where possible we use **email** rather than mail out marketing material.
- ✓ We use **recycled Reflex paper** in our office, and only print out documents when necessary.
- ✓ Even our pens are encased in recycled paper!





- ✓ Within each retreat the **toilet paper, tissues and paper towel** are all made from **recycled paper**.
- ✓ **Rubbish bin liners** are compost bags used in the retreats are **biodegradable**.
- ✓ The **Somewhere Unique** website is hosted by The Web Factory, whose servers are Carbon Neutral.

## Transport

- ✓ Public transport is not readily available in many rural areas, so cars have become an essential part of life. There is however a simple way to reduce our car's impact on the environment. At **Somewhere Unique** we have chosen to take part in the **Greenfleet program**, where trees are planted every year to help create a forest, and as they grow they will absorb the greenhouse gases that our motor vehicles produce.
- ✓ In March 2011 we purchased a **diesel Ford Mondeo** as our business vehicle, which uses around 6.5L/100km. Our previous vehicle was a Toyota Rav4, using around 10-11L/100km.
- ✓ **We provide our guests with bicycles**, so that they can reduce carbon emissions during their time in Wollombi, ride into the village and a number of local wineries, get some exercise, take in the natural beauty of the area, and hopefully spot native fauna.

