

## Green IT taking the slow road

### **Australia's private and public sector enterprises are more likely to be talking than walking when it comes to taking the high "Green IT" road to lower power consumption.**

That's the message from a survey in December of CIOs and IT managers from more than 250 medium and large Australian organisations, all of which operated their own data centres with about half having more than 1000 employees

Fewer than 30 per cent of respondents had undertaken measurement of their IT power consumption, while more than 50 per cent said they were considering doing so. "If you can't do that you haven't even started," the director of Sydney-based Connection Research Graeme Philipson said of his company's survey.

He told a media briefing that this typified the slow adoption rate of Green IT strategies. "A key finding is this level of latent interest in Green IT, everyone thinks they should be doing it, there is a lot of interest, but actual implementation is very low. The proportion of our respondents who say they are about to do something very soon is very high. This is before all the mandatory reporting schemes and higher electricity charges start to hit over the next 12 to 24 months."

Two sectors to score poorly were the Government and Defence sector, which made up 21 per cent of respondents, and the Finance, Insurance and Business Services sector (16 per cent).

"Generally speaking, governments are less green in their IT than the industry average, finance is also scoring low," Philipson said.

This is despite that fact that both sectors are more reliant on IT for service delivery than most others with up to 25 per cent of energy consumption because of their IT operations.

The survey results do not provide separate profiles of federal, state and territory and local government agencies in their approach to Green IT, but the recommendations of the Gershon Review into Federal ICT management are likely to push Canberra's agencies in that direction according to Kevin Noonan, head of consulting for Intermedium. "It has been an area that has not received sufficient focus but has come under the spotlight since Gershon," he said.

Agencies were more actively adopting thin client technologies, moving to automatically power-down PCs when not in use and reduce overall numbers of desktops to more closely fit demand. Upgrading data storage systems was also on the agenda, driven by Gershon's recommendations to consolidate data centre usage across agencies. "There are pseudo data centres which are really servers in broom cupboards that should be in a proper data centre. They are tremendous power drains because they are running off the building's power and air conditioning."

Manufacturers are even less likely than government and finance sector enterprises to adopt Green IT, reflecting the fact that IT is generally responsible for a small proportion of their overall power demand.

Enterprises in the Transport and Storage sector, which represented 4.5 per cent of respondents, were the most likely to have implemented Green IT strategies.

Philipson said, "They are very conscious of supply-chain efficiencies and they are in such a competitive market they have to find any savings they can."

The survey found that power consumption was not a major consideration for enterprises when they chose to outsource some IT functions, adopt software-as-a-service models, remote processing such as cloud computing, or other strategies that can reduce their direct power demand. "Cloud computing as a concept is still very immature and people aren't looking at it as something that is going to save them electricity," Philipson said.

While server virtualisation had been implemented by 85 per cent of respondents, less than half of these cited power consumption reduction as the reason for the move.

Only a third had implemented systems to power-down PCs overnight and just 6 per cent said their organisation had bought carbon offsets to reduce net carbon emissions. This is partly because of companies being wary of entering a market where there are no standards in place to rate carbon offset products or to benchmark emissions. He said about 40 different companies were offering software to measure an organisation's carbon footprint. "It's an extremely untidy classic immature market with lots of little vendors."