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Green IT is still a long way off

"Australia's IT managers and CIOs are very green. They are concerned about climate change, and they see IT as being a key driver on reducing their organisation's carbon footprint. But they are not doing very much about it," said Graeme Philipson, Research Director, Connection Research.

Only half of them have measured the environmental impact of IT, and most of these have only just started doing it and do not have mature systems in place. Fewer than 10% have set targets for the future. Only one quarter have measured IT's power consumption.

There is some awareness, but for most organisations it is still early days. Nearly half of organisations have appointed someone specifically responsible for Green IT. This person is rarely the CIO or IT manager, and then usually reports to someone other than the CIO or IT manager. Another quarter of organisations are considering appointing such a person.

The findings are contained in a major report into Green IT in Australia, 'Green IT and Sustainability in Australia', released by Connection Research. The report is based on a large sample of over 250 CIOs and IT managers from a broad spectrum of Australia's ICT-using organisations.

The results of this groundbreaking study are now available to Australian users, vendors and consultancies to help them develop their Green IT strategies. The results form the most comprehensive overview available of the state of play of Green IT in Australia in 2009.

Other key findings from the report include:

- Around 85% of organisations have introduced server virtualisation, and half of these report that energy reduction was either the main reason for doing so, or that it was an important factor in their decision.
- Not many organisations have implemented any formal energy reduction schemes such as powering down PCs overnight, or looking at power settings on servers, but most have started on an ad hoc basis.
- There are three major barriers to reducing energy consumption: IT departments are waiting on corporate directives, there is a lack of money or no budget, or there is a lack of people or expertise. Each is mentioned by around one-third of respondents.
- Fewer than 10% of respondents are using any sort of software tool to measure or monitor the organisation's total energy consumption or carbon footprint.
- Respondents say the least important factor is green IT marketing from vendors but in a separate question they say that computer vendors are their main source of information on green IT.
- Green IT factors are becoming more important as procurement factors. Users take into account such issues as ease of disposal, the commitment of the vendor towards sustainability, product lifecycle management and the energy rating of hardware.
- CIOs and IT managers are strong believers in the reality of climate change. Only around 8% could be described as "climate change deniers" — around the same proportion as the population as a whole.
- They also strongly believe that IT has a major role to play in reducing the organisation's overall carbon footprint. And most believe green IT costs no more than "business as usual".