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Government CIOs lead green IT charge

Federal government agencies are further advanced in terms of the march towards Green IT than their private sector counterparts – and three quarters of all agencies have appointed someone to be accountable for green IT – most often the CIO.

Fujitsu's *Green IT – the State of the Nation* report released in Canberra today indicates that to some extent government agencies have been aided in the march to greener IT by the relatively large scale of their IT operations which has allowed them to benefit from Green IT strategies such as data centre consolidation and virtualisation. But attitudinal surveying has also revealed that there are fewer climate change sceptics among the ranks of Government CIOs than there are in either the population at large or among private sector CIOs.

While 52% of average Australians say they are very concerned about climate change, and 47% of all ICT managers are similarly concerned, a whopping 65% of Government ICT managers expressed "extreme concern" about the issue. The report's authors see this greater than average concern about climate change to be the "better education" of Government IT managers and the release a year ago of the Gershon report which tackled the issue of the Government's carbon footprint related to its use of IT.

Conducted earlier this month on behalf of Fujitsu Australia by **Connection Research**, the survey used a methodology developed by **Connection Research** and RMIT which has been designed to generate a Green Readiness Index which allows different organisations and sectors to be compared.

Alison O'Flynn, director of sustainability for Fujitsu, said that this report follows on from a survey released earlier this year which explored private sector attitudes to Green IT. Dubbed *Green IT – the Convenient Truth*, that report found that much of the motivation to adopt Green IT approaches in the private sector was motivated by a desire to cut costs.

O'Flynn told iWire that there were different Green IT drivers in Government. "The private sector is very focussed on cost savings. The government agencies are focussed on cost mitigation and are more altruistic regarding Green IT."

She noted what also "stood out was the level of ownership for more accountability in Government. Seventy five percent of organisations had someone accountable for Green IT and in 50% of cases it was the CIO."

She said that contrasted sharply with the situation in private enterprise where fewer than 10% of CIOs were held accountable for Green IT initiatives.

In terms of specific Green IT measures more than 90% of government agencies had replaced CRT monitors with flat screens, and were enthusiastically turning off lights in the data centre out of hours. However there was a reluctance to turn off PCs when not in use. "Our research indicates some resistance to this practice among some operations managers who prefer PCs not to be powered down so that they are easier to update and maintain," according to the report. Over time government agencies should get a much better idea of the impact of these sorts of initiatives with around two thirds of agencies reporting that they were measuring ICT's environmental impact.

O'Flynn said that the company hoped to repeat the survey in a year's time to "see how this translates into action in the next 12 months," and that the company might in the future extend its Green IT survey to State and Territory government agencies.