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WORLD-LEADING PAYBACK FROM NZ ELECTRICITY SAVINGS MODEL

New Zealand-developed compressed air audits could be a winner for climate change worldwide, says Julia Beck, the Australasian project director for manufacturers of industrial compressed air systems.

Her Sydney-based organisation, the Compressed Air Association of Australasia (CAAA), is closely involved with the New Zealand Electricity Commission in establishing a business model to grow a sustainable network of accredited compressed-air systems auditors.

The Commission's research estimates electricity savings of 230 GWh a year can be achieved through improved performance of compressed air systems. These savings are enough to keep a city the size of New Plymouth in electricity for a year, or more than the Cobb power station generates annually.

The Electricity Commission has been the catalyst in bringing together industry interests, including the Energy Management Association of NZ, University of Waikato and members of the CAAA, to work on ways to capitalise on the savings opportunities.

This has resulted in a framework for certifying compressed air systems auditors and complementing their existing business activities. The approach mirrors the Commission's other efficiency initiatives, such as the highly successful 'RightLight' Programme, which also involve co-ordinated industry participation in developing commercially viable solutions to accelerate change and lock in savings.

New Zealand's first two compressed-air systems auditors were recently accredited, and thirteen more have completed training at the University of Waikato and are on the path to accreditation.

So far 100 'walk-through assessments' of compressed air systems have been completed through a programme supported by the Commission. Typically, the assessments have identified electricity savings from the air systems of around 30 percent.

Ms Beck said New Zealand was leading the world by helping large manufacturers become aware of the savings that can be achieved quite easily and often with a payback of less than two years.

"In Australia, there is potential for billions of dollars in savings from reduced electricity consumption," Ms Beck said. "Our problem in Australia is that State governments are responsible for energy efficiency programmes and they are notorious for disagreeing, making it difficult to introduce nationwide energy efficiency initiatives.

“But the New Zealand model is providing proof that the Electricity Commission’s programme is working and we will use this in Australia to convince the authorities that this is a winner for climate change,” she said.

“Nowhere else in the world has advanced to the stage that New Zealand has achieved and there is every reason for the New Zealand model to be picked up worldwide. We are also engaging in the development of an ISO standard for the auditing, which will improve the programme’s international appeal,” Ms Beck said.

Facts about electricity savings

The Electricity Commission has a range of programmes that include the RightLight campaign, Efficient Street Lighting, Motor Bounty Scheme, Motor Rewind Workshop Quality Scheme, Motor Systems Optimisation and the Compressed Air Programme.

To date the programmes have provided electricity savings that will generate $250 million of net present value to the New Zealand economy.

The cost of establishing the programmes is around 1 cent per KWh, compared to a conservative estimate of the cost of new generation of around 8.5 cents per KWh.

The savings represent 90,000 tonnes of reduced CO_2 emissions per annum. With the current price of CO_2 at $28 per tonne, the value of the CO_2 savings (if sold on the international market) would be worth $2.52 million per annum.

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