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**Adding the Green Advantage
A Survey of Australian SME's**

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Abstract:

The Small to Medium business sector has been, in the most part, ignored by research into corporate sustainability. We believed that because of the large number of SME's, and their relative lack of power in influencing government policy, that they would be an important sector to examine in terms of how they can employ more sustainable practices. Even though, individually, they may not have a large impact on the environment, the fact that they make up 97% of Australian businesses and employ just over 50% of private sector employees, indicates that collectively, they have a substantial effect on the environment.

This paper reports on the findings of some empirical research conducted on some 800 SME's across Australia in order to ascertain the attitudes of SME's to issues of sustainability. By listening to their responses, we could then develop mechanisms that would encourage small and medium enterprises to become more sustainable. This is the first Australia-wide survey that has looked at the issue of sustainability exclusively

within the SME sector.

In addition to looking at the attitudes of SME's to sustainability, the study sought to determine whether particular industries were more aware of these issues, which issues were of most concern, what were the current barriers to implementing sustainable practices; and what assistance SME's could use to become more sustainable.

The results were very encouraging, showing strong awareness of, and enthusiasm for, environmental issues amongst SME's, but with some very entrenched barriers. However, this is just a first step in working with SME's to develop strategies to add the SME Green Advantage.