

Piper playing emissions tune

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Piper Alderman's long-held relationship with the resources industry is providing the impetus to build a complementary emissions trading scheme practice, with the assistance of an external consultant from Europe.

The firm hosted an emissions trading workshop in Perth last month to fill a shortfall in client knowledge. Leaders from the resources industry were also invited. The workshop – which will be repeated in other offices around the country in August – was in part inspired by issues discussed at the annual conference run by oil and gas body Australian Petroleum Producers & Explorers Association.

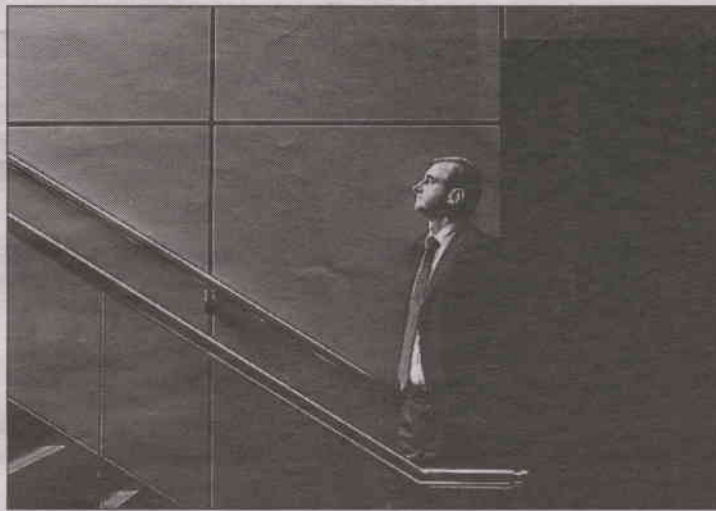
To help clients prepare their businesses for emissions trading reforms, the firm has formed an alliance with UK-based Consilience Energy Advisory Group, litigation and policy advisers to the global energy industry.

Piper Alderman flew CEAG chief executive Liz Bossley, a specialist in the European emissions trading market, from London to speak at their Perth workshop. Ms Bossley is now a consultant to the firm.

Piper Alderman has also retained Robert Pritchard, of ResourcesLaw International, the Sydney-based energy adviser that has worked with the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation secretariat in Singapore on cross-border energy trading.

Piper Alderman managing partner Gordon Grieve says it is the firm, and not the clients, that is trying to instil a sense of urgency when it comes to learning about the emissions trading scheme.

"Clients still haven't come to grips with the need that they are



Gordon Grieve says his firm is trying to instil a sense of urgency. Photo: NIC WALKER

going to have to deal with emissions trading," he said.

"It's a little bit like GST. There is going to be a need, with every resources contract – everything that virtually any client does – to take account of emissions trading.

"We are trying to educate them at the same time as educating ourselves."

Piper Alderman began life under the name of Bartley & Bakewell in Adelaide in the 1840s, but from 1998 spread to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Though the South Australian government often attracts blame for the slowness of the national legal profession project, Mr Grieve said the problems of harmonisation had not affected the firm greatly.

"We drive the firm as though we have to comply with the east coast standards," he said. "Our Adelaide office is our second biggest in terms of revenue, but it's been there the longest and all

of our procedures are pretty standard across the firm."

Piper Alderman's major revenue spinner is Sydney, though Brisbane is now its fastest growing office.

The firm has 12 lawyers in Brisbane and aims to double that over the next few years. There are 25 lawyers in Melbourne.

Part of the growth plan is to preserve the ratio of partners to lawyers at a steady 1:2 ratio.

"We are trying to get it right, so obviously our profit levels are commensurate with other firms', but it's always been our position that we try to give clients partner attention whenever they require it," Mr Grieve said.

He will be signing off as managing partner in July next year. But unlike many who take on the leadership role, Mr Grieve has continued advising clients in commercial litigation and corporate law throughout his term, to allow for a seamless transition back to full-time practice.