

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## If this product could talk...

27 October 2009, Sydney, Australia – St James Ethics Centre is proud to announce the launch of ***If this product could talk: Product Roadmaps***, part of the Federal Government (Treasury) funded National Responsible Business Practice Project. Most products and services go through many steps before they arrive on our shelves, or in our communities. By taking a closer look at the complete supply chain, right from the primary producer through to the consumer, product roadmaps can give industry, business and consumers a greater understanding of a product's or service's social and environmental impacts.

Is it more socially and environmentally responsible to buy frozen potatoes, or potatoes from the fresh food aisle? How many times has the t-shirt you are wearing made its way across the globe before it ended up in your local retail store? Do you know what type of wood your desk is made from and what the work conditions of the people involved in the production were like?

In a society impacted by green-wash and confusion about the true impact of the products and services we consume, the roadmaps provide an important tool. St James Ethics Centre commissioned a diverse group of collaborators - the Total Environment Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Net Balance to build the road maps. The end result is that consumers, suppliers, business owners and government can be better informed as to where a product comes from and the related sustainability issues associated with its production. In addition the Centre plans to hold a series of roundtable discussions with key stakeholders to develop recommendations to address sustainability impacts.

**The product roadmaps are now available to view and download as a public good for use by industry bodies, businesses, educators and the general public.** These include a generic product roadmap for business to build their own roadmaps and as a powerful educational tool, together with a suite of sector specific roadmaps and detailed reports for the garment industry, the building sector and the fresh food industry (potato). These can be used as a framework to develop roadmaps for additional sectors and/or products.

By sharing this resource, St James Ethics Centre encourages industry bodies, educators, business and government to help build a greater understanding of the supply chain. The Centre welcomes continual dialogue and invites those creating roadmaps to join with the Centre to build a "National Directory" of roadmaps to be housed on the Centre's HUB of Responsible Business Practice in Australia.

Contact St James Ethics Centre for more information or visit [http://thehub.ethics.org.au/sme/product\\_roadmaps](http://thehub.ethics.org.au/sme/product_roadmaps).

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The National Responsible Business Practice Project is funded by the Federal Government, through Treasury to enable St James Ethics Centre to engage Australian businesses in identifying and adopting more responsible business practices



## Quotes

### St James Ethics Centre Quote

At a time when 'green washing' and questionable labelling is rife, the Centre sees product road-mapping as a way of bringing transparency to the sustainability impacts and opportunities of goods and services, as well as the complexities within them. They provide a compelling public educational message to consumers and the community in general.

Rosemary Sainty  
Head of the National Project, St James Ethics Centre

### CHOICE Quote

Product Roadmaps are an important tool in understanding the impacts of a product throughout its life and the roles of each player, including consumers, in making products more socially and environmentally responsible.

These product roadmaps help consumers in understanding their role in consuming sustainably, and how industry and government are helping them achieve this.

Nick Stace  
Chief Executive Officer, CHOICE

## If this product could talk... Product Roadmaps Background Information

### What is responsible business practice?

Responsible business practices include a company's positive impact on society and the environment through its operations, products or services and through its interaction with key stakeholders such as employees, customers, investors, communities and suppliers. Read more: <http://thehub.ethics.org.au/>

### What are product roadmaps?

Product roadmaps identify the social and environmental impacts of a specific sector/product throughout the supply chain and then identify areas for improvement, cross-participant opportunities, government responses and tools that can assist to increase responsible business practices.



### Why are the roadmaps relevant for business?

At a time when 'green washing' and questionable labelling is rife, the Centre sees product road-mapping methodologies as a way of bringing transparency to the sustainability impacts and opportunities of goods and services, as well as the complexities and competing needs within them. They provide a compelling public educational message to consumers and the community in general.

- As climate change legislation and the impacts of the global economic downturn continue to unfold, business will need capacity to compete in both national and international business spheres.
- Pressure through the procurement process, particularly as the cost of carbon begins to work its way through business operations, will require readiness and preparedness without the burden of reporting processes which favour larger businesses.
- This element of the Responsible Business Practice Project aims to enable business to prepare for and compete fairly in a changing business environment through the development of practical tools via a process of multi-stakeholder consultation.

### What is the relevance to small to medium business (SMEs)?

Formal processes of reporting favour larger businesses and SMEs need to be given the capacity without the burden to compete, particularly in the procurement process, as the cost of carbon and broader social impacts begin to work their way through business operations.

Alignment of government policies for example on climate change and procurement ('value for money') will need to be made more explicit. Providing SMEs with the capacity to participate in the use of practical tools, to recognise RBP practices they already have underway and assist in being strategic will enable readiness, preparedness and market differentiation.



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## If this product could talk... Product Roadmaps

### Background Information

#### How do I create my own roadmap?

Visit [http://thehub.ethics.org.au/sme/product\\_roadmaps](http://thehub.ethics.org.au/sme/product_roadmaps) for more information and instructions. You will find In-depth reports and product road maps from the three collaborators covering the fresh foods (potato), building, and garment sectors as well as a generic downloadable road mapping tool and resources. Alternatively you can contact St James Ethics Centre on 02 9299 9566.

#### Is it suitable for students?

Yes, one of the key audiences for the Product Roadmaps is students – including primary, secondary and tertiary students. To find out more information on how students and educators can use this tool contact: [rbp@ethics.org.au](mailto:rbp@ethics.org.au)

#### What do I do with the roadmap once completed?

The Road maps have been developed as a public good through a collaborative and inclusive process by the Centre - developed to share expertise and promote action across business, government and the community of consumers. By sharing the road mapping tools the Centre (HUB) is sending a national call to action, to build a "National Directory" of road maps. Please contact [rbp@ethics.org.au](mailto:rbp@ethics.org.au)

#### Availability of resources

Following this launch each of the product roadmaps and accompanying reports will be made available to view and download on the HUB of Responsible Business Practice in Australia's website: <http://thehub.ethics.org.au>

#### The project in context

##### National Responsible Business Practice Project - National SME Project

The Federal Government, through Treasury is funding St James Ethics Centre over a period of three years to expand responsible business practice in Australia. A particular focus of the research is to develop resources to support responsible business practice among small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Unlike corporations, SMEs traditionally have greater levels of trust, connectedness and responsiveness to their communities in Australia and it is likely that they currently underestimate their collective power. Through this project the Centre will engage many more Australian businesses in identifying and adopting more responsible business practices.

#### Funding

The Federal Government, through Treasury has funded St James Ethics Centre (the Centre) over a period of three years to expand responsible business practice (RBP) in Australia. Funding was received in November 2007. Since that time the Centre has worked to develop resources and establish initiatives on a broad scale.

#### What is next for the project?

##### Sustainability Roundtables

The Centre is currently planning a series of industry roundtables to discuss the findings and recommendations stemming from the research into the sector product roadmaps. Beginning in November, the Centre, Council of Textile & Fashion Industries of Australia Limited and the Brotherhood of St Laurence will be hosting a roundtable event in Melbourne to discuss the findings and recommendations from "Travelling Textiles: a sustainability roadmap of natural fibre garments".



## If this product could talk... Product Roadmaps Background Information

This roundtable represents a unique and important opportunity in Australia to draw together a broad range of key stakeholders from business, government and civil society to address the sustainability impacts highlighted throughout the garment roadmap with the aim of improving collaboration across the garment industry and promoting sustainable development throughout.

### Good Business Register: The National Register of Responsible Business Practice

The centrepiece of the SME project is the development of the Good Business Register - an online platform created to enable SMEs or a business of any size to log into a secure website to build their responsible business practice profile for use in the procurement (supply chain) process. In addition the Register will allow SMEs to communicate their sustainability credentials to customers, investors and other key stakeholders.

The Register centres around 5 key principles of responsible business practice, each with 4 focus areas. The Principles are in alignment with key international instruments including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and UN Global Compact to ensure comparability in international business dealings. The product road mapping tools will be linked to the Good Business Register.

The Register will be nationally available to join following the launch at the International Small Business Conference on 1 December 2009.

### Project Collaborators

The following organisations were selected to collaborate on the product roadmap development on the basis of their diversity and expertise:

- environmental expertise: Environment Centre
- social Inclusion and Human Rights expertise: Brotherhood of St Laurence
- expertise in consumer and business assurance in sustainability: Net Balance.

It should be noted that each of these collaborators in turn consulted widely with key actors in their individual sectors. We extend our thanks to all project collaborators including Peter Davies, Vice Chair, UK Sustainable Development Commission & the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in the UK.



### About St James Ethics Centre

St James Ethics Centre is a fully independent, not-for-profit organisation which provides a non-judgmental forum for the promotion and exploration of ethics. The Ethics Centre's mission is to encourage and assist individuals and organisations to include the ethical dimension in their daily lives, and thereby help to create a better world. St James Ethics Centre has no political or religious affiliations.



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