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BUSINESS EGO PHARMACEUTICALS

BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

There's no ego in how they care for the planet

By Casey Neill

Recycling is a growing part of the Ego Pharmaceuticals workplace.

The family-owned company moved into a warehouse and office in Dandenong South earlier this year.

Its manufacturing still takes place in Braeside, and will for decades to come, but the skincare specialist needed more space.

Managing director Alan Oppenheim said the Oppenheim Way site was right on EastLink and 40 per cent of the business was export-based.

There's parkland nearby, easy bicycle access and a retail precinct on the way.

"We wanted high land, because we're worried about flood risk with increasing climate change," he said.

The site is 9.5 hectares "which is planning for our next 60 years".

Ego has so far built on 20 per cent of the land.

"Long-term, our aim is to have manufacturing here as well as Braeside," he said.

Mr Oppenheim said recycling was something the company had been doing for decades, and the Dandenong South site had allowed Ego to expand its efforts.

"It's one of those things that starts off softly and then you do more and more and more," he said.

For Ego, it started off with big cardboard boxes.

"Once you start with that you go onto a whole lot of other levels," he said.

Many Ego products are sold in plastic bottles, so recycling them was the obvious next step.

Further to that, Ego changed from receiving printed bottles from its supplier to receiving blank bottles and attaching stickers to reduce waste.

"A blank bottle could be used for 50 different bottles," Mr Oppenheim said.

"It starts with cardboard, it moves to plastic and then it moves to paper.

"Next to pretty much every printer we have a whee bin."

Uncollected printing was piling up, so Ego thought that even better than recycling the waste was reducing it in the first place.

All staff now hit print on a document, walk to the printer and scan a swipe card to receive the hard copy.

"If you sent it by mistake, it doesn't come out," he said.

Ego also recycles printer cartridges and polysty-



Ego managing director Alan Oppenheim in the Dandenong South warehouse.

rene. There's a box for recycling e-waste and light globes, and separate bins for landfill and recycling in the canteen with clear marking.

"If it's easy to do, we all do it," Mr Oppenheim said.

"The system here encourages us to put everything we possibly can into the recycling."

Further on the environmental front at Ego's new site, double glazing controls sound and temperature, the heating is gas, and solar panels run LED lights on motion sensors.

"All of that stuff saves money and saves electricity," he said.

"It's not done for financial reasons.

"We're a strange entity."

The Ego letter of employment features an agreement to support the values of Ego, which includes doing the right thing for the community.

Planet Ark recycling programs manager Ryan Collins said many workplaces didn't understand

they might be wasting money by sending waste to landfill.

Australian workplaces pay a State Government levy for each tonne of eligible waste sent to landfill, which in Victoria is \$62 a tonne.

Mr Collins said 66 per cent of consumers were willing to pay more for goods and services from companies committed to reducing their environmental impact.

He said 80 per cent of employees would like more recycling in their workplace and said that having recycling facilities made them feel like they worked for a responsible employer.

The Business Case for Less Waste is a new Planet Ark resource designed to help staff identify inefficiencies and unnecessary costs and make the case for better systems.

BusinessRecycling.com.au provides online and over-the-phone information and resources.