

Banking on CIOs turning green

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Chief information officers at Australia's largest banks are publicly promoting green technology initiatives as they play their part in wider moves by their companies to become carbon-neutral.

In early May, Australia and New Zealand Banking Group's chief information officer, Peter Dalton, told a Sydney conference that IT executives had an obligation to take the lead in their organisations to reduce the impact of technology on the environment.

National Australia Bank's chief information officer, Michelle Tredenick, last week echoed her counterpart's comments, telling a Trans-Tasman Business Circle lunch that her team would seek to cut down energy usage at its data centre and pursue other green technology projects.

"Companies who are not in control of their impact on the environment will be the new social outcasts," she said.

Ms Tredenick said a data centre optimisation strategy, now being developed, would try to cut down the energy used by the bank's back-office processing facilities, which make up about 20 per cent of the bank's total electricity bill. She said that figure was already at the lower end of data centre energy usage compared with other organisations, which ranged from 15 per cent to 40 per cent.

Like most companies, NAB has moved to a distributed computing model over time, using a host of cheaper, smaller servers rather than a few large and more expensive machines.

Ms Tredenick said: "This type of deployment has reached the limit of its usefulness from a general efficiency perspective

because of the higher combined energy and cooling requirements." She said the model eventually created inefficiencies in processing because each smaller server was not being used to full capacity.

NAB will also replace older, inefficient technologies with

"That figure was at the lower end of energy usage"

more efficient alternatives. Energy efficiency is becoming one aspect of its technology selection criteria.

The bank will also consolidate its databases and servers to get the maximum use out of each, and implement virtualisation technology, which allows organisations to run multiple operating environments on one single

machine rather than inefficiently using a single server each.

Other technology strategies include replacing old, large cathode-ray tube monitors with LCD equivalents, turning off equipment and lights when not needed, and using captured rainwater for cooling tasks.

Ms Tredenick said she saw the impact of the drought every day in her home state of Queensland and was worried that succeeding generations might not have the luxuries associated with plentiful water supplies that she and her companions had in their childhood.

"At the end of the day, if we haven't been utilising one of our carbon-free days by videoconferencing from home, we'll be hopping into our low-energy cars, or on bicycles to head home to water-saving gardens," she said.