

TOURISM AUSTRALIA *Sustainability* STORYTELLERS

CLAIRE BAGULEY

Group Sustainability Product and Design Manager, Spicers Retreats | Queensland



The focus on sustainability at Spicers Retreats is forensic, examining every detail of operations across nine luxury retreats, the eco-camps on the Scenic Rim Trail and the wildlife refuges in between.

“The company philosophy is driven by founder, Jude Turner, who’s a life-long conservationist, and is constantly evolving: the question of sustainability prefaces every business and design decision. We live and breathe it,” says Claire Baguley, Spicers Group Sustainability Product and Design Manager.

“We established a Sustainable Futures Taskforce, committed to achieving our target of zero net emissions,

25% reduction in water consumption and zero net waste by 2030, and we aim to be single-use plastic free from 2025.”

The company recently engaged a data analyst to take a deep dive into determining the exact carbon footprint of each property, and comparing that across the Group.

“It’s been a discovery project: we’re looking honestly at our performance and where we need to improve. All our research is wrapped up in our long-term goal of being the first carbon-neutral retreat group in Australia.”

But they’re not waiting on results to start implementing programs.

“NOW WE KNOW THAT FEELING CARED FOR RESPONSIBLY IS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY. GREEN IS OUR GOLD.”

“For the past three years, we’ve been very focused on waste reduction and recycling. Internally, we have minimum standards: ‘Plant the Seed’ initiatives, where each retreat has implemented 10 landfill waste reduction initiatives. Then we have ‘Grow the Seed’ initiatives, where each property



"OUR TEAMS JUST SOAK IT UP – THEY LOVE IT. IT'S NOT EASY TO BE GREEN – ESPECIALLY IN THE LUXURY SPACE, BUT OUR STAFF ARE COMMITTED – AND THEIR PASSION AND INSPIRATION ARE CONTAGIOUS. GUESTS REALLY VALUE THEIR SUSTAINABILITY KNOWLEDGE. WE'RE ON A CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT TRAJECTORY."

chooses three additional initiatives, such as the zero-waste Asian Food festival held by our Tamarind Retreat."

Staff are encouraged to think entrepreneurially and are empowered to enact programs and communicate openly with guests.

"We are in the fortunate position of having the long-term vision and the resources – through the Turner Family Foundation – to take risks and undertake research."

One such R&D project is a \$2 million renewable hydrogen energy trial, partly funded by a Queensland Government grant, that will enable all Spicers eco-camps to off-grid diesel-powered generators with hydrogen storage units. It's hopefully a precursor to powering all the retreats in the future.

"We'll be first to market in the ecotourism space and hope to showcase the system as an alternative power source for other ecotourism, remote and farm applications."

Jude Turner's long-held dream of creating a multi-day walk is now a reality, with the Scenic Rim Trail through the Main Range National Park bookended by



traversing Spicers' private properties, Hidden Vale and Spicers Peak Station.

Creating the walk itself and the 'camps' along the way – from glamping tents to hand-built wooden cabins – was underpinned by a 'light touch' environmental policy that covered every aspect of the construction and operation.

The project was taken to another level, since the private lands were gazetted as Nature Refuges at the Turners' behest, preserving them in perpetuity, and establishing a safe wildlife corridor into Main Range National Park.

"We want to show people that you can still enjoy the land while protecting it. So many layers of consideration went into the long-term sustainability of the operation and the environment. I was so proud when the walk opened and we had feedback from the first guests, who were fascinated to learn about the walk's development, and really appreciated our effort and achievement. It was a phenomenal project to work on and an amazing vision to help bring to life.

"My hope is that we inspire guests to make sustainable choices of their own."

In 2017, the Turners established the Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre with a Foundation commitment of \$18.5 million, thought to be the largest-ever family contribution to conservation in Queensland.

Operated in conjunction with the University of Queensland,

"WE'RE ETHICALLY FOCUSED AND TRANSPARENT: WE'RE HAPPY TO SHARE OUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WITH ALL OUR STAKEHOLDERS AND WITH INDUSTRY."

the rehabilitation, research and breeding centre is situated amid a 4,500-hectare private nature refuge that is being restored to provide sustainable habitat for threatened and rare wildlife. Guests can tour the facility and participate in koala tracking safaris to learn more about the work being undertaken to help reverse biodiversity loss.

"Our granular attention to sustainability is a market differentiator for us, for sure. But while we're investing in sustainability for the advancement of the Spicers Group, we want to leave a legacy of information for others to follow." 

CONTACT DETAILS:

Claire Baguley
Group Sustainability Product and Design Manager, Spicers Retreats
+61 497 997 084
claire.baguley@spicersretreats.com
www.spicersretreats.com

