

## Guide names best offset providers

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AUSTRALIA'S first independent guide ranking carbon offset providers will be launched today to protect consumers and businesses from "carbon cowboys".

The guide is a partnership between the Total Environment Centre, Choice and the Institute of Sustainable Futures.

It comes after a BusinessDay investigation in February exposed several offset providers that had been misleading consumers through vague promises and questionable offsets. One was forced to take down its website after the investigation found its forestry offsets did not exist.

TEC director Jeff Angel said the voluntary carbon market was riddled with confusing claims, products and carbon calculators.

"The Australian carbon offset industry is worth over \$44 million a year and its credibility has been in question," he said. "But Carbon Offset Watch will force the industry to grow up by naming the best and most reliable.

"Consumers who are actively trying to reduce their carbon footprint are making an important contribution but need to be assured, not duped into buying offsets that provide little environmental benefit."

There are about 50 offset providers in Australia and the guide ranks 20 of the largest from "outstanding" to "adequate". It has named Climate Friendly, Cleaner Climate, Climate Positive, SMRC (Southern Metropolitan Regional Council) and the Carbon Reduction Institute as those that scored top marks.

None of the 20 offset providers scored less than 60%, which would have put them in the "not recommended" category. CO2 Australia, CO zero and Global Carbon Exchange scored the lowest, or an "adequate", result. Other providers were invited to take part but chose not to.

Offset providers are marked on how they encourage customers to reduce carbon emissions before offsetting (19.5% of the total score), the quality and reliability of the offset (73% of score) and the desirability of the underlying projects used to generate the offset (7.5% of score).

Mr Angel called on the Federal Government to release its national standard for carbon offsets, which it committed to in last year's election and promised to deliver by the end of the year.

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