



Greening Hotels and Fair Labour Practices

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Abstract

In recent years, a number of labour union strategic initiatives have been developed which seek to leverage consumer preference against employers in the accommodation services sector. These programs largely focus on rating and certifying hotels based upon environmentally and socially responsible behavior and labour friendly practices. In part, the campaigns are a response to the perceived 'green-washing' of hotels through voluntary, self-reporting rating systems. This paper examines three union campaigns that recommend hotels according to social and environmental criteria: The Fair Hotels campaign (Ireland); the First Star program (Australia); and INMEX (United States and Canada). We find that these emerging campaigns differ in orientation, but all face challenges in their ability to meet their strategic goals. Specifically we find limitations related to the geographic scale of the campaigns and their inability to advocate for any significant shift toward a more socially and environmentally sustainable accommodation services sector.

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Introduction

In recent years, a number of labour union strategic initiatives have been developed which seek to leverage consumer preference against employers in the accommodation services sector. These programs largely focus on rating and certifying hotels based upon environmentally and socially responsible behaviour and labour friendly practices. In part, the campaigns are a response to the perceived 'green-washing' of hotels through voluntary, self-reporting rating systems. This paper examines three union campaigns that recommend hotels according to social and environmental criteria: The Fair Hotels campaign (Ireland); the First Star program (Australia); and INMEX (United States and Canada). We find that these emerging campaigns differ in orientation, but all face challenges in their ability to meet their strategic goals. Specifically, we find limitations related to the geographic scale of the campaigns and their inability to advocate for any significant shift toward a more socially and environmentally sustainable accommodation services sector.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of recent trends in labour geography and its potential to contribute to tourism development literature, advancing a recent intervention (Zampoukas and Ioannides 2011). We then provide a brief overview of green certification in hotels, with specific attention to the North American case and its vulnerability to criticisms of 'green-washing' accommodation services. The paper then turns to three cases of labour union action in the 'certification' of hotels as socially responsible (e.g., labour friendly) and environmentally conscious. Such union action is aimed at leveraging consumer power over employers. The paper concludes with a discussion of the limits and possibilities of this strategy for hotel worker unions and some theoretical implications for labour and tourism geography as fields of inquiry.

The research in this paper is largely from secondary sources, web-based campaign material, and union documents. Select interviews were held with union officers in Australia, Canada and the US. There has also been some personal communication with campaigners in Ireland and North America. The communications explored the genesis of the campaigns and their role in overall union initiatives.

Labour and Tourism Geographies

Labour geography emerged as a field of study, largely following an intervention in the 1990s by economic geographers who identified a theoretical imbalance in approaches to explaining changing economic landscapes that biased the power of capital over that of labour (see Herod 1997, 1998). Now well over a decade old, recent commentaries have evaluated the labour geography project, tracing the intellectual development and identifying areas of debate and future directions (see Lier 2007, Castree 2007, Tufts and Savage 2009, Rutherford 2010, Coe and Lier 2011). A review of all these interventions lies beyond the scope of this paper. There are, however, several key themes in the debates. First and foremost is concern over how to best conceptualize the agency of labour in contemporary economic landscapes. How we theorize the geographical scale of labour action (e.g., global versus local) beyond institutional responses (i.e., trade

unionism) to include the labour process is another area of contention. Lastly, there is a call to pay more attention to the role of social reproduction and complex worker identities in producing labour geographies.

Zampoukas and Ioannides (2011) have argued that labour geography offers some interesting theoretical possibilities for critical tourism geography and a better understanding of the hospitality sector. Recent debates in tourism geography have focussed on the nature of a so-called 'critical-turn' which slowly emerged over the past two decades (Britton 1991, Milne and Ateljevic 2000, Shaw and Williams 2004, Ateljevic et al 2007). The 'critical-turn' is largely a split from a traditional tourism studies that failed to explore underlying systems of power and oppression (capitalism, sexism, racism, colonial legacies etc.) which both shape and are shaped by tourism development. At the same time, there has been significant debate over the foundations of 'critical tourism studies' which are located in post-structuralist theoretical approaches at the expense of political economy (see Bianchi 2009, Gibson 2009). The authors have a great deal of sympathy for these as the authors question the critical turn stating "one wonders whether amid all the excitement concerning this new approach we have *thrown out the baby with the bathwater*" (Zampoukas and Ioannides 2011, 35, emphasis in original). Debates within labour geography are not entirely different from debates within the so-called critical turn as there is no singular 'labour geography' but rather contested labour 'geographies'. Tod Rutherford (2010) for example argues that while understanding work from beyond the workplace (e.g., by examining social reproduction, complex worker identities) has benefitted labour geography, traditional workplace struggles over labour process and wage-relations as well as class formation should not be de-emphasized. If critical tourism geography, does refocus on Marxist traditional empirical and theoretical categories (which some are calling for), all labour geography may not be greeted with open arms even by those who argue for a stronger tourism political economy.

Labour geography has rarely addressed issues of consumption beyond union lead boycott strategies (see Johns and Vural 2000). Yet, even here it demonstrates that the arenas of production and consumption are not easily separated. As most tourism services are produced and consumed in the same places, we would argue that separating labour process during the act of production is extremely difficult in most cases. Consider the emotional labour contained in greeting guests and how complex class, gender and race relations are constantly reified through interactions with tourists through work (see Sherman 2007). Linda McDowell and colleagues (2007) have examined the micropolitics of labour segmentation in this regard, but largely through the lense of worker-management interaction. It is here, where non-dichotomous constructions of production/consumption in tourism geography can inform a productivist labour geography.

This leads to another cautionary note. It is perhaps dangerous to make claims that one area of inquiry is able to better inform any other. We believe that labour geography can indeed contribute to critical tourism geography studies, but a true articulation would also have labour geography learn from the theoretical gains of tourism geography. To have one displace the other through renewed intellectual or political emphasis (which is often

ephemeral in most instances), clearly would be a case of ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’.

This paper approaches the issue of trade union-driven fair hotel certification within a labour geography framework and its discussions of labour agency and scales of union action. Debates on the agency question in labour geography continue to be a focus of researchers. Coe and Lier (2011) have recently argued that labour geographers must move their discussions of worker agency forward and understand power and worker identity as both temporally and geographically variegated. On the question of scale and worker mobilization, geographers have also made significant contributions. Tourism geographers also are more than aware that tourism does involve a ‘global-local’ nexus, but is subject to different geographical logics than other sectors such as manufacturing with different capital mobilities. In terms of worker eco-rating systems, there are significant questions as to which ‘scale’ (e.g., local, national, international) they should be produced.

Where labour geographers have not been as active, however, is the investigation of the links between labour and questions around the production of nature. Capitalism actively produces nature, valuing some environments over others and failing to incorporate all of nature into market mechanisms which should, theoretically, assign value to water, air, soil and wildlife. As Scott Prudham (2005, 8) clearly states ‘capitalism needs nature’, yet it inevitably falls victim to environmental crisis as so many vital inputs are undervalued. This occurs even as nature becomes increasingly incorporated into accumulation (Smith, 2007). The case of climate change and tourism-related industries is an excellent example of this relationship. Tourism aggressively commodifies ‘natural’ amenities such as scenic beaches, yet the carbon emissions from air travel to warm seaside locations inevitably leads to global warming and rising sea levels which threaten those destinations.

In Canada, researchers have noted the impacts of recreational activities on natural ecosystems since the 1970s. In the 1980s, the positive and negative environmental impacts of tourism were studied, paving the way for research on sustainable tourism practices and ‘ecotourism’ development in the 1990s. By the early 2000s, however, the impacts of global environmental change-- including but not limited to climate change-- on tourism became a major focus (Gossling and Hall 2006, 15). However, this literature almost completely neglects issues of work and labour (Tufts 2011). Clearly, there is room for a cross fertilization of literatures and such theoretical articulations will be necessary to understand worker initiative eco-rating systems for tourism-related industries.

Greening or Green-washing Hotels?

For almost two decades, large hotels have initiated environmentally-based programs to save money and reduce the inputs of energy and chemicals into the hotel guest experience. Many of these programs involve training workers in such ‘responsible’ environmental behaviour (see Gossling 2010, 273). In the 1990s, hotels began asking guests to state if they were content with their sheets not being changed every night during prolonged stays. Today, this is common practice in most hotels as is the practice of

asking guests to leave unused towels on the towel rack and put used towels on the floor or in the tub. These practices not only reduce the energy used to do laundry, but also the costs that are associated with it. The growth of environmental consulting firms in the US (e.g., Green Hotel Association, EcoGreen Hotel, Green Consultants) which cater to accommodation companies wishing to reduce their costs and environmental footprint is evidence of how seriously the industry considers green practices.

More recently, hotels have taken this practice and ‘marketized’ it by sharing the savings directly with consumers. On November 18, 2010 a group of women workers and a small delegation of community supporters entered the Sheraton Centre hotel in Toronto to protest the ‘Make a Green Choice’ program which gives guests a \$5 per night discount if they choose not to have their room serviced. The hotel company claims that the savings in energy (and CO₂ emissions) and chemicals are beneficial to the environment.

Workers represented by UNITEHERE Local 75 countered that there was no real reduction in harm to the environment. Rooms that have not been serviced in days consume almost the same amount of energy to clean as a room maintained daily. The union argued that work is intensified for room attendants who still clean rooms on a quota system and the ‘Green Choice’ program is simply a means of reducing labour costs through ‘green-washing’ the hotel experience (UNITEHERE, 2010). Room attendants, mostly migrant, racialized women, are the largest group of workers in hotels. They also work on a room quota system. The above program reduces the number of rooms to be serviced (decreasing the amount of work for individuals) while increasing the amount of cleaning to do in rooms that have not been serviced daily (intensifying work).

UNITEHERE has been wary of how hotel companies use the environment to shift labour processes since the earliest consumer behaviour initiatives. Hotel guests are, however, now given the ‘Green Choice’ to ‘opt-out’ of a major hotel service. Clearly, the program has significant immediate and future implications for workers and the real savings to the environment are largely unknown. Indeed, there is potential for ‘green-washing’ the accommodation sector with a range of practices that do actually very little for the environment, but manage to significantly reduce the labour costs of hotel stays. There are several green hotel eco-certification programs (e.g., Green Seals Lodging, Earth Check, EcoLogo, Qualmark, and Green Key). In North America, a widespread certification program adopted by the industry is the ‘Green Key’ Eco-Rating program, a program endorsed and promoted by the Hotel Association of Canada (see <http://www.greenkeyglobal.com/default.asp>, http://www.hotelassociation.ca/site/programs/green_key.htm).

Green-Key is a voluntary eco-rating program for hotels, motels, and resorts in Canada and the United States based on an annual registration fee of \$350CDN (\$600 in the US). There is an on-line, self administered audit and certification that evaluates energy use, water, waste management, building infrastructure, land use, environmental management, and indoor air quality. It assesses several operational areas of the hotel and properties can obtain a Green-Key rating of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) based on their practices. The cite sends the property a ‘plaque’ with their rating and also maps the hotel on the ‘global’

interactive website with all Green Key certified hotels. The company states on its website that an on-site inspection ‘may’ be conducted to confirm the rating.

It is argued that sustainable tourism certification helps to minimize the industry’s negative impacts on the environment, cultures and societies (Rome, 2005). There are ranges of certification programs offered for hotels, which vary from online self-auditing programs to third party certification (Clarke, 2002). Most hotels require an incentive to become certified, such as reduced operating costs, positive image for the brand or logo, marketing opportunities, or moral justification (Rome, 2005). As such, many certification programs offer the use of their logo, association with their brand, listing in directories and websites, media attention, and access to green markets (Rome, 2005). As these marketing benefits are realized, an increasing number of hotels are working towards achieving eco-rating certification (Bedlington, 2009).

There are of course criticisms of such programs. Some hotels work towards certification for positive reasons, but others may make quantifiable claims about their business’ environmental performance to enhance their corporate image, when in fact, these businesses may not be making any environmental improvements. This form of green-washing occurs when a “company makes misleading claims that create positive association between a company’s products and the environment, when no such benefit exists” (Bedlington, 2009). Some certification programs are little more than paid memberships that provide positive public relations and media attention (WWF-UK, 2000). Tourists may find it difficult to discern which certification programs are genuine. Many certification programs have conditions that are easily accessible and can be achieved by most businesses. However, a third-party audit increases the transparency of the certification. As well, awarding the certification after the environmental commitment is achieved could increase transparency; as opposed to awarding certification following membership fees or an online self-audit that simply commits a hotel to actions (WWF-UK, 2000).

Eco-rating certification provides an exclusive competitive advantage to hotels through the use of a recognizable logo (WWF-UK, 2000). However, this is problematic as certification can be costly, thus excluding smaller businesses that may not have the available financial resources. Not surprisingly these programs cater to larger hotels. Most eco-rating certification programs focus solely on environmental performance, and exclude the holistic concept of sustainable tourism. As well, although the certification programs focus on environmental performance, this is often related to the structure and use of the building. Rarely do eco-rating programs focus on indirect environmental issues, such as local biodiversity and habitat loss. Some programs such as Green Globe 21 are more encompassing than most certification programs, requiring companies to protect surrounding habitats, ecosystems and endangered species, while educating their guests on these issues (WWF-UK, 2000).

Most certification programs offer little guidance on how to integrate social and cultural issues into tourism, such as social responsibility and economic equity (WWF-UK, 2000). Implementing certain environmental actions or performance measures may adversely affect the hotel’s employees. It is important for certification programs to include social

measurements within the process. This is particularly important if changes to accommodate environmental process impact the labour process or the quantity of work needed. For these reasons alternative rating systems are emerging, created by workers' associations in the hotel sector. These programs are focussed on social responsibility and worker friendliness with or without environmental criteria.

Union Certification: Three Cases

'Fair' hotel certification programs sponsored by labour unions are in their infancy, emerging only in the last few years. Yet, there is already significant diversity in the programs and their scope and strategic aims do differ significantly. What is common is that, while the certification program is very much based on eco-certification systems, there is actually very little in terms of eco-criteria as they are largely based on social responsibility.

Ireland and SIPTU's Fair Hotels Campaign

In Ireland, accommodation and foodservices are only 6% unionized compared to about one third of the entire labour force (CSO 2010). Despite the limited institutional presence in Ireland's hotel sector, the Service Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) launched the Fair Hotels campaign in 2009 "in response to the wide scale denial of workers' rights in the Irish hotel industry as evidenced by official statistics from the State's labour inspectorate" (see <http://www.siptu.ie/campaigns/siptuorganisingcampaigns/fairhotels/>). In order to receive Fair Hotels certification the hotel must: "1) recognise staff's right to collective representation in the workplace; 2) let staff know that they are free to form a union without intimidation or hindrance; and 3) arrange for staff to meet with Fair Hotels organisers".

The Fair Hotels campaign was endorsed by a large number of unions in Ireland, its national labour federation and International Global Union Federations, most significantly the IUF and community organizations. To date there are 46 hotels certified as Fair Trade hotels in Ireland. According to the Irish Hotels Federation 2009 Annual Report, there are now over 900 hotels in Ireland following a period of significant expansion since 2005.

What is unique about the Fair Hotels approach is that while the aim of the campaign is to improve the quality of employment and worker rights in the sector, the strategy is largely based on a 'positive boycott'. In simplest terms, Fair Hotels seeks to direct business (individuals, conference planners) to certified hotels through its website. This approach differs from strategies (discussed below) which focus merely on boycotting hotels and employers that are less favourable to workers and unions. In many ways, the program aims at increasing the competitive advantage of hotels that are less hostile to workers. At the initial stages, the focus was simply convincing workers and unions to patronize Fair Hotels, but this strategy has been extended to community groups. Only in limited cases, have certified hotels themselves publicized the designation and listed it on their site.

Australia and United Voice's First Star Program

As in Ireland, the Australian hotel industry also has relatively low union density. Less than 10% of accommodation, cafes and restaurants were unionized in Australia 2004, a decrease from almost 20% in the mid 1990s (see Peetz 2005). The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU, renamed United Voice in 2011), has a limited presence in the sector. The union developed the First Star program as a means of raising standards and reducing turnover in the sector (Interview, February 2011). In 2009, the union launched the First Star program which differed significantly from Fair Hotels. First and foremost, the rating system incorporated environmental as well as fair labour practice criteria (see table 1). The union is part of the Climate Action Network Alliance.

Second, the program was largely developed from the top down as the union outsourced its development to a media firm, initially as labour-management partnership exercise to encourage hotels to improve retention through better employee relations and attract guests (Interview, February 2011). Most interesting, however, is that the First Star program has yet to certify a single hotel with its designation deeming all Australian hotel chains as 'unworthy' of a first star (<http://thefirststar.com.au/hotel-guide/>, last accessed July 8).

In interviews with union officials responsible for the campaign, it was admitted that the union was not happy with the initial launch of First Star and was reconceptualising the campaign. It appears the United Voice has shifted its focus toward its more recent 'Hotels with Heart' campaign aimed at raising standards in the sector through more traditional means (e.g., bargaining) and shaming employers with poor employment relations as 'Heartbreak Hotels' (see VIWRC 2010). The program is very much inspired by UNITEHERE's Hotel Workers Rising Campaign in North America and is very much a shift away from a consumerist strategy toward director pressure on employers and the government.

North America's UNITEHERE and the Greening of INMEX?

Union density in hotels in North America is difficult to convey meaningfully. National union density in the hotel sector is lower than the all industrial average, but union membership is largely concentrated in large full service hotels in metropolitan centres. For example, in Canada only 16.7% of hotel workers are unionized (just over half the average for all workers), yet in Toronto the majority of workers in the large downtown hotels are unionized (see Tufts 2011). Similarly, hotel workers in Las Vegas are also highly unionized (see Gray 2004). In this respect, the case is slightly different from Ireland and Australia. UNITEHERE is a major hospitality union in North America representing over 100,000 hotels in 900 properties.

In the United States, UNITEHERE established the Information Meeting Exchange (INMEX), a web-based utility which assist meeting planners with socially responsible event planning (see www.inmex.org). Founded in 2006, the non-profit organization alerts meeting planners to upcoming potential work-stoppages in hotels, promotes 'force majeure' clauses in contracts allowing events to be moved during a strike, and even

provides assistance with logistics in order to attract business to union hotels. While the INMEX platform was publicized at its inception, it has been largely stagnant in recent years. In communication with UNITEHERE officials several explanations were offered. Organization capacities for the entire union shifted towards the Hotel Workers Rising Campaign and a vicious inter-union conflict following a recent merger. Key union activists who developed the platform left the union to work in the civil service following the election of Obama in 2008. In the interim, however, the union has maintained its union hotel guide which provides a list of boycotted and recommended hotels.

It was reported by union officials that the INMEX platform will receive more resources from the union in the near future. There are opportunities for UNITEHERE to intervene in the green certification process through INMEX. Specifically, the union itself could rate its employers and issue a union 'rating' similar to the well known diamond and star systems used by travel providers. There are precedents for this type of action at scales ranging from communities rating local firms to international ratings of firms based on their environmental and social responsibility (often carried for socially responsible investment purposes). There are benefits to union involvement in the process. While not completely independent, the union rating would have more legitimacy than a rating for a fee provider. The union could also incorporate social and industrial relations criteria into the rating system (e.g., community involvement of the firm, neutrality in organizing practices). Lastly, and perhaps most important, the differentiated ratings could be used to play employers against one another if the rating became accepted and valuable. These would all expand on existing boycott strategies.

Implications and Conclusions: The Limits and Possibilities of Labour Union Green/Fair Certification

The three cases discussed above are admittedly only in embryonic stages. It is possible, however, to reflect on their limits and potential for hotel workers and the sector. These are all 'boycott' strategies, even if they are 'positive boycotts' in some cases. The long-term effectiveness of union lead consumer boycotts has been questioned for sometime (Pruitt et al 1988, Meyer and Pines 2005), the full discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

As a certification strategy, however, there are some obvious benefits. Unions (or their created 'front' organizations) certifying businesses may be viewed as legitimate parties, neither government nor purely industry based. This legitimacy would allow hotels to avoid the traps of 'green-washing' their service, something customers are increasingly sceptical toward (especially given the self-reporting of subscription based certification systems).

Union certification also integrates social and environmental criteria. Divorcing the social (in this case work issues) from the environmental can lead to a very eco-centric environmentalism. For example, recycling in hotels is good, but how sustainable is it if work only intensifies for room attendants forced to sort waste? It is here, where Rutherford's (2010) call for a renewed emphasis on the labour process in labour

geography may also be warranted when looking at how changes in work may very well be the centre of effective climate change adaptation and mitigation. At the same time, consideration of environmental issues by unions strengthens their position with consumers and communities as they draw attention to conditions beyond wages and industrial relations.

In the auditing process workers themselves are presented with learning and training opportunities. If unions are going to certify hotels, union activists could do these audits themselves with proper training in auditing and identifying opportunities to reduce a hotel's carbon footprint. In many instances, workers already do this through a number of audits with respect to health and safety and accessibility. Similar to health and safety, the environment may be an arena of engagement and negotiation where labour and management can build structures for less adversarial workplace relationships. In conversations with UNITEHERE officials about the implementation of a future worker auditing program health and safety committees were seen as a possible venue.

There are also limits to these new strategies. There are benefits to integrating blue-green criteria into certification programs. Using the 'green-choice' program above as an example, reducing the demand for clean towels and sheets does reduce demand of energy and labour. If jobs are lost through such programs, will unions weigh environmental protections less than 'fair' criteria? There is always the danger of co-opting union certification toward a 'green-washing' outcome. While labour set in opposition to capital, workers and employers do have shared interests. Both hotel workers and owners are harmed when tourists choose other hotels or places. Any certification system would have to reward hotels quickly with a higher rating for compliance or jeopardize the entire firm. In some cases, unions may be just as tempted to rate a hotel more favourably as the hotel company itself. Despite their difference, all three certification strategies are embedded in what Rathzel and Uzzell (2011) identify as a 'mutual interests discourse' where management, workers and the environment can benefit through cooperation and solidarity. In this approach, deeper partnerships with communities limited distancing the unions from social movement building around the climate change issue.

There is also a question of the appropriate 'scale' of the program. In the case of the First Star program, the rating is aimed toward large, in many cases multinational chains. Would small operators be able to meet the same social and environmental criteria as large firms? Would an owner/operated bed and breakfast or motel be considered anti-union if it was a family operation? In the geographical sense, at what scale should a rating system be developed, locally, regionally, nationally or internationally? Would a rating system developed by Anglo-American unions be fairly applied to hotels in the Global South? Here the paradox of climate change becomes apparent. Specifically, while there is large consensus that climate change is a global phenomenon that requires global action, climate change is also a geographically uneven process that inspires different degrees of action (see Swyngedouw 2006). For example, climate change means much more to tourism workers in small Pacific island states facing rising sea-levels and beach erosion than hotel workers in continental North America (Milne 2011). Such variegated effects will challenge international solidarity among hotel workers and their unions.

These are all legitimate concerns, but perhaps the big issue with green/fair certification programs is that they allow unions to escape the hard questions about expansionary capitalism-nature relations. At the moment, green/fair certification programs are largely techno-centric responses to environmental challenges. Such certification practices are less likely to produce eco-centric policy responses such as travel rationing which reduces overall tourism activity. Criticism of such fair trade certification as reformist, however, does not mean that such initiatives will have no tangible environmental benefit or impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Perhaps we need to turn toward theorists who see society and nature in dialectical terms (see Castree 2001: 2002, Harvey 1996; Swyngedouw 2006). If capitalism and nature are in a dialectical relationship then we must regard both capital and labour as implicated. It is here, where tourism and labour geography might cross fertilize as we start to examine how tourism labour, inevitably affected by changing environments are responding and how such responses may dramatically change tourism economies, local destinations, and the very idea of climate change as a social and natural process.

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Table 1: The First Star vision for an environmentally sustainable hotel

Commitment, honesty, transparency

The hotel has a publicly stated commitment to reaching a high level of environmental performance, and then continually improving on it. The hotel aims for net positive environmental outcomes across the business.

The hotel supports and participates in a respected industry-wide environmental rating system, such as NABERS. The hotel publicises the rating it receives and seeks to improve it.

The hotel owner and the hotel operator agree on quantifiable environmental performance indicators in the management agreement.

NO green-wash

The hotel does not employ misleading rhetoric, or try to inflate the significance of small actions.

Engaged workers and guests

- Staff participate in developing the hotel's sustainability program, and are paid for this time.
- Environmental Sustainability Committees exist at the level of workplace, chain and industry. These committees have genuine representation from staff and the employer, and meet regularly to develop the hotel's sustainability initiatives.
- The hotel invests in improving environmental competency and accredited training for staff.
- The hotel includes green skills in the career progression plan for staff.
- The hotel participates in The First Star in order to enable guests to make informed environmental decisions.

Energy and water

- The hotel meets world class standards for energy and water efficiency, exemplified in Australia by NABERS or standards set by the Green Building Council.
- The hotel investigates measures such as a green retrofit, passive heating and cooling, and onsite energy generation, and implements these measures if appropriate.
- The hotel continually seeks to reduce its use of non-renewable resources.
- The hotel continually seeks to increase the proportion of its energy coming from renewable sources, and has a plan to move towards 100% renewable energy.

Waste Reduction

- The hotel has a reuse, recycling, and waste reduction program that aims to reduce waste to ecologically sustainable levels.
- The hotel continually seeks to reduce the amount of resources it uses and waste it sends to landfill, and has a plan to entirely eliminate waste sent to landfill.

Local environment

- The hotel avoids adverse affects to the local environment, and also seeks to nurture and repair the local environment – including biodiversity, water quality, and local community.
- New hotel developments are built according to best practice guidelines in areas such as materials, transport and emissions, as outlined in the Green Building Council's Green Star program.

The First Star vision for an environmentally sustainable hotel industry

- The industry commits to an environmental sustainability rating-system that is rigorous, trustworthy, and easy to understand. This system should be linked to a government-approved standard such as NABERS or the Green Building Council's Green Star.
- The industry joins the fight for a safe climate on planet earth. This means a world where global warming is limited to below 2°C, and we follow scientists' calls for at least 40% emissions cuts by 2020 and zero net emissions by 2050.
- The industry develops and retains staff who are skilled in delivering environmental sustainability.
- The industry attracts strong investment and government support, based on its commitment to environmental sustainability and its strong contribution to the Australian economy.

(Source: <http://thefirststar.com.au/sustainability/>, last accessed July 8, 2011).