



## **WHO ARE WE**

The Queensland Private Enterprise Centre (QPEC) is an independent non-profit voluntary organisation supported by businesses and individuals who support the dynamic role of private enterprise in our society.

## **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

We believe that:

- Quality education is the key to a better-informed and more productive democratic society.
- Teachers, students and business people are at the forefront of a technological revolution, which is changing the way we learn, work and live.
- There is recognition by both employers and educators of the benefits of sharing information and experiences of mutual interest and concern.

## **WHAT WE DO**

For more than thirty years, QPEC (formerly the Institute of Public Affairs, Qld) has been helping teachers and students to understand what makes business tick.

Throughout Queensland, QPEC promotes contact between business people, teachers and students.

## **THE ECOMAN PROGRAM**

The ECOMAN concept was developed originally as a Business simulation-training program for employees of the Swiss-based "Holderbank" Group and its member companies.

Recognised as also having potential for students, ECOMAN was introduced to European high schools as a hands-on learning tool to familiarise students with the world of business.

The name "ECOMAN" is derived from the words, economics and management.

The broad aims of ECOMAN are:

- To promote an understanding of business, and the contribution private enterprise makes to the community.
- To consider the private sector as a career choice for school leavers.
- To make participants aware of the commercial realities of operating a business.

The license to operate ECOMAN for schools in Queensland has been generously provided to QPEC by Queensland Cement Limited, a member company of the "Holderbank" Group.

## **The ECOMAN program in detail**

The ECOMAN program is conducted over three days with approximately eighteen participants and is designed to simulate the operations of a medium size manufacturing company over a four-year period.

Business concepts such as strategic planning, financial accounting, cost management, sales and marketing and human resource management are introduced and explained in simple terms and the concepts are then reinforced through the operation of the company.

The participants form into three companies, which compete for market share, sales and profit, whilst operating in a dynamic business environment.

At the start of the simulation each company has a one-third share of the market plus identical balance sheets, cash, securities, inventories, accounts payable, accounts receivable, short and long-term loans, share prices and dividends.

They also have the same production facilities, machines, buildings, automotive fleets and cost structures.

Each company produces two products, one for the commercial market and one for the domestic market. They each utilise two types of machines each capable of manufacturing both products.

All three companies have historically allocated the same expenditure on research and development, personnel training, advertising and production. They have sold their finished products at the same prices and have experienced the same levels of market demand.

An economic scenario is supplied at the start of each financial year which indicates the general mood within the market place, likely consumption patterns, predicted cost-of-living increases or decreases, labour market trends, price expectations, long and short term interest rates, availability of supply of raw materials, competitive threats and possible government levies.

Within each company a managing director has to be appointed, plus directors of production (2), sales and marketing (1), finance (1), and human resources (1).

The new board members of each company meet and prepare a five-year business plan, discussing past performances and setting appropriate future strategies for their companies.

After running their company for four years (over two and a half days), each team prepares a verbal report which the managing director of that team presents to their shareholders. They must cover the performance of their company over the four years and its prospects for the coming fifth year, all with reference to the five year plan they themselves decided upon initially. They must then field questions from the shareholders on the performance of their company.

During the simulation the directors must deal with statutory authorities, union officials and business consultants. One or both of the facilitators may assume these roles.

Each year the three individual boards of directors, as in the real world, meet to decide upon a range of budgetary and management decisions to carry their company into the next year. These decisions are based upon detailed accounting feedback on their company's performance in the marketplace the previous year, available figures on the performance of their competitors, and economic and business environment forecasts for the ensuing year.

These decisions include the anticipation of market demand and the setting of production targets for each product, the establishment of quality targets, personnel numbers and wage adjustments. They also include decisions on long and short-term borrowing and the dividends to be paid to their shareholders.

Further decisions include the selling or purchasing of production machines, setting the sale price for each finished product, expenditure levels on advertising and research and development of each product and deciding on the training budget for each classification of employee.

Using the ECOMAN Program each board can make decisions, enter them in the computer and review the results immediately, just as directors of progressive companies in the real world can utilise economic models to analyse possible outcomes of their decisions. Very few programs of this nature allow such a wide range of decisions. and many such programs analyse only the effect of such decisions within the one company.

Where the ECOMAN Program differs from other business simulation models is that, at the end of each financial year, the decisions of each of the three boards are analysed and the program determines how the companies would have fared in competition with each other in the open market and in prevailing economic circumstances. A board can make very sound, well thought out and responsible decisions, but just as in the real world one of the other companies can make even better ones.

## **Administration of ECOMAN**

ECOMAN Programs are ideally conducted outside the school premises to enhance the concentration of the students on the activity. They are usually held in the boardroom or training rooms of the generous venue sponsors of QPEC/ECOMAN, providing the students exposure to those companies and their facilities. In addition, sponsor's representatives, where possible, attend the "Report to Shareholders" on the last day of the course giving this aspect of the program enhanced importance in the eyes of the students.

In country areas, business premises are not always available and very successful programs have been held with the school as the host venue.

Sponsors of the ECOMAN Program provide either financial sponsorship or facilities to hold the program. Sponsors in 2011 included:

- ABN Amro Morgans
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Services, Department of Communities
- AON Hewitt
- Australian Institute of Company Directors
- BDO
- Bolands Centre (Cairns)
- Brisbane Club
- Brisbane/Roma Indigenous Coordination Centre
- Bundaberg Sugar
- Cement Australia
- Charles LaRosa
- Clayton Utz
- Corrs Chambers Westgarth
- Department of Employment, Economic, Development and Innovation (Toowoomba)
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Ernst & Young
- Grant Thornton
- Griffith University, Griffith Business School
- Gympie Cooloolo Rotary
- Institute of Chartered Accountants
- Kestral Coal
- Marsh
- Martin Albrecht AC
- McCulloch Robertson
- Mid-Town Rotary
- Minter Ellison
- Morgans RBS
- NAB Creek Street / Mt Gravatt
- Nerang RSL
- Norton Rose Australia
- Price Waterhouse Coopers
- QUEST Ipswich
- QLD Economics Teacher's Association
- Redland City Council

- Rowland
- Stanwell Corporation Limited
- Thiess
- Tynan MacKenzie
- University of Queensland
- Wagners
- Westpac

QPEC endeavours in every way to minimise the cost of the three-day program to schools by seeking company and community sponsorships including the Griffith Business School who contribute full administrative support and program materials. However, additional costs are involved for country areas including travel (air fares and car hire) and accommodation costs for two facilitators.

Queensland schools which have recently provided ECOMAN Programs to their Year 11 and 12 students include High Schools and Colleges in the districts of: Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Gold Coast, Gladstone, Ipswich, Kingaroy, Logan, Redlands, Toowoomba and Townsville. Schools participating in the ECOMAN program during 2011 included: Alexandra Hills SHS, Bremer SHs, Brisbane Boys College, Brisbane Grammar Schools, Brisbane SHS, Browns Plain SHS, Bundamba SSC, Cairns SHS, Cavendish Road SHS, Centenary SHS, Churchie (Anglican Church Grammar School), Citipointe, Cleveland SHS, Emerald SHS, Fairholme College, Ferny Grove SHS, Gladstone Schools, Grace Lutheran College, Gregory Terrace, Gympie SHS, Ignatius Park (Townsville), Indooroopilly SHS, Ipswich Grammar, Kenmore SHS, Kingaroy SHS, Mansfield SHS,

Marist College Ashgrove, Pacific Pines SHS, Parklands Christian School, QETA Schools, Redlands College, Rochedale SHS, Rockhampton SHS, Rosewood SHS, Runcorn SHS, Ryan Catholic College (Townsville), Shalom College (Bundaberg), Somerville House, St Laurence's College, St Luke's Anglican (Bundaberg), St Anthony's (Townsville), Toowoomba Grammar, Toowoomba SHS, Trinity Bay SHS (Cairns), Wellington Point SHS, Woodcrest SC, and Yeronga SHS.

Several of these schools have repeated the program for two or three successive years and have indicated their intention to offer it to students on an ongoing annual basis. Any of these schools would welcome a telephone call seeking its view on the efficacy of the program.

**CONTACT**

Enquiries concerning the **ECOMAN Program** should be directed to:

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<b>ECOMAN 3-DAY PROGRAM COSTS</b> listed are current for 2012 and are reviewed annually		
Brisbane - <b>\$2,850</b>	Outer Brisbane - <b>\$2,950</b>	Country areas - <b>\$2,950</b> plus airfares, accommodation and car hire for two facilitators.
<b>ECOMAN 2-DAY PROGRAM COSTS</b> listed are current for 2012 and are reviewed annually		
Brisbane - <b>\$2,350</b>	Outer Brisbane - <b>\$2,440</b>	Country areas - <b>\$2,440</b> plus airfares, accommodation and car hire for two facilitators.