

# Green thumbs

Written by: Julie May

Financial planning firm Green Associates recently made headlines following its move towards developing socially responsible investment portfolios for its clients.

Green Associates senior financial planner Trina Wood says the firm has been working on developing socially responsible portfolios for its clients over the past 12 months.

“It’s a handy area to specialise in given the name of our business and it has also proven an interesting area of the market to specialise in,” Wood says.

“Regardless of your thoughts on social and environmental issues, socially responsible investments do tend to outperform, so you don’t have to be a greenie for these types of investments to make sense.”

She says investment strategies of this nature take into account social responsibility and environmental sustainability and at the same time aim to maximise financial returns.

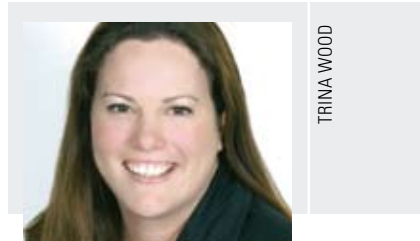
“It is an area of the market that is getting a lot more air time and one that clients are inquiring about a lot more than in the past, particularly, in our experience, female clients,” she says.

Green Associates is also trying to be socially responsible through its move to becoming a paperless office and by participating in things such as National Tree Day and other charities, where they also assist overseas schools.

In recognition of the team’s work in the field of social responsibility, the group was recently named a Sensis Social Responsibility finalist in the Telstra ACT Business Awards, as well as a finalist in the MYOB small business category.

Wood says Green Associates comprises five advisers, including principal financial planners Tony and Craig Green, who she describes as a down to earth father and son team.

“Craig was actually the youngest authorised representative within the Axa Financial Planning dealer group when he joined Green Associates, and I can say that he and Tony manage the family side of the



business very well, which is often something easier said than done.

“Tony and Craig don’t play favorites, they have no ego, they have an open door policy, they’re flexible and they treat everyone’s ideas equally.”

She says the team often goes out for lawn bowls or a round of golf, and admits they’re a team that works hard and plays hard.

“We have a business coach that comes to see us every quarter and our coach often comments that our attendance in these sessions is second to none,” she says.

“We also do all our external training as a team and have a very inclusive workplace.”

She says she fell into financial planning as an assistant to an adviser when she was 21.

“My parents always knew I’d end up doing something in numbers as I was able to do multiplications from a very early age. So, when I came home and said financial planning was the line of work I was going to follow, it was definitely an aha moment for them,” she says.

Not long after, Wood was headhunted to fulfill a senior client manager role elsewhere.

Staying with the firm for five years, she moved up to become a junior adviser before going into business with an accounting partner when she was 26.

“In 2008 I was talking to a business coach who told me to speak to Axa Financial Planning, which is when I found out about Green Associates,” she says.

“I sold my client base to the firm after that discussion and have been with them ever since.”

Offering advice on financial planning, risk, superannuation, self-managed super

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## SNAPSHOT

**Name:** Green Associates

**Location:** Canberra and Brisbane

**Funds under advice:** About \$90 million

**Clients:** Around 500

**Platform:** Summit

**Software:** VisiPlan

**Research:** Morningstar

**Staff:** Eight

**Dealer group:** Axa Financial Planning

funds and gearing, the Canberra-based business offers limited accounting advice out of its Brisbane office as well.

Wood says it offers clearly-defined service packages and mainly services pre-retirees.

“We host social events twice a year and seminars which cover anything from financial planning and socially responsible investing to health and wellbeing,” she says.

“Being part of Axa Financial Planning is also quite beneficial as a lot of people associate security with the brand. However, while they are attracted to the big name, they like that they can also get the benefits of dealing with a small business.”

The practice has lasted because of its ability to adapt to changing conditions, she says.

“Through the global financial crisis, rather than lay off staff, Green Associates employed me and another adviser, and opened its office in Brisbane,” she says.

“Going forward, the plan is to expand the Brisbane office and grow the Canberra office over five years, and double the number of advisers as well.”

She says if she had a magic wand and could change one thing about the industry today it would be simplifying compliance requirements so more time could be spent with clients.

In terms of why Green Associates does what it does, she says staff like to make a difference in people’s lives during the good times and the bad.

“One client situation that stuck with me was when we took out life insurance for a client who had had breast cancer. Sadly years later she passed away and while that was not a situation we were able to prevent, the life insurance payout ensured that her husband, son and daughter were all taken care of financially.” ◀