

TOURISM AUSTRALIA

Sustainability STORYTELLERS



KELLY WEBB

Hotel Manager | Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley



“You can’t fail to be blown away by the epic natural beauty of this place,” says Kelly Webb, Hotel Manager of Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley. “Waking up here every morning is its own reward – and heightens my sense of the importance of caring for this amazing natural environment.”

Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley (E00WV) was the first resort in the world to be certified carbon neutral by an internationally-recognised accreditation process when it opened in 2009. Its 40 ultra-luxury villas, conference and restaurant facilities – which incorporate green design principles - shelter on 7,000 acres between two National Parks in the World Heritage-listed Greater Blue Mountains, west of Sydney.

Part of the purchase agreement with the Department of Environment was a long-term commitment to restore the land (part of which had been used for grazing) to its pre-colonial condition.

“When you look at a map, you see that infrastructure takes up just two per cent – a tiny paw print on the wilderness - but we’re responsible for everything that lives and breathes on the entire property.”

An early priority was the restoration of the Wolgan River, which included planting 200,000 trees across the property to stabilise the river banks and establish wildlife corridors; as well as controlling invasive plants and feral predators. Over the years, E00WV guides and guests collected around two million

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native seeds, representing 25 species, in a seed bank that proved to be invaluable in re-planting land damaged by the 2019 Gospers Mountain bushfire.

“We offer our guests ways to engage – hands-on - in our conservation and regeneration efforts. It adds a sense of purpose to their stay. Our nature-based activities take guests to some of the furthest flung corners of the property to appreciate the scale and wildness – and to ‘meet’ the wildlife.”

Despite the fire’s impact, the property boasts the densest population of wombats in NSW, as well as rare fauna including gliders, platypus and access to the glow worm tunnel hike in neighbouring national parkland.”

“Fostering these populations and supporting scientific research is a big focus for us. Our critical conservation work pre-fires gave us a head-start on our regeneration task: we’re able to help nature do what she needs to do.”

E00WV’s relatively small infrastructure footprint and broader regeneration efforts have contributed to maintaining its carbon-neutral status for the past 12

years – verified by multiple and annual environmental audits – and reducing its offset requirement to zero. An Environmental Management Plan sets further, future emissions reduction targets, minimising energy consumption through introducing solar power and hot water; LED lights; and sensors and timers. All water is captured and recycled on site, and food and beverages are sourced regionally and sustainably. Guests have the option of a transfer by Tesla from Sydney, with charging stations on property.

The resort has implemented a food processor for wet waste and installed a glass crusher and cardboard compactor, with the ultimate goal of no waste to landfill by 2030.

“Reducing our carbon footprint is a process of continuous improvement: we’ve reduced our Scope 1 and 2 emissions by a further 524.57 tCO2e (17%) since our revised baseline year of 2016. Now we’re looking at converting our staff village to solar and we’ve introduced the world’s first fully sustainable and de-constructable mattresses.

“Conservation has always been in our DNA but now, post-pandemic, our approach resonates even more with ultra-high-net-worth world travellers whose values around nature, sustainability and regeneration have evolved: beyond fine food and comfort, they’re seeking a far more enriching experience.” 🌱

CONTACT DETAILS:

Kelly Webb
Hotel Manager
Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley
+61 428 768 022
kelly.webb@oneandonlywolganvalley.com
oneandonlyresorts.com

