

HOW TO MAKE YOUR HOUSEHOLD AND BUSINESS CARBON NEUTRAL.

1. Reduce Household and Business Greenhouse Emissions from Electricity Use – responsible for 33% of all of Australia's emissions.

Contact your energy provider and change your electricity and your business electricity accounts to a **100% Renewable Energy Tariff**. Your household and business electricity consumption will become carbon emission-free. **THIS IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING ANY OF US CAN DO AT THE MOMENT.** It will cost the average household \$ 5.00 to \$ 10.00 per week extra.

If your provider does not give you a renewable energy option, visit www.greenpower.gov.au and switch to one that does.

Save this extra expenditure, and further reduce your carbon emissions by doing the following (most simple first):

- Switch off all appliances on 'standby' at the power socket whenever possible and certainly every night before going to bed. (Saves the average household about \$100 and 750kg of greenhouse gas emissions per year).
- Install long-life light bulbs as standard ones fail (Each fluorescent bulb saves \$ 45 over its lifetime).
- Use less hot water; fit water-saving shower heads, use cold or warm water only for washing machines. Only boil full jugs when you really need to! (Likely to save about \$100 per year and 750kg of emissions)
- Use air-conditioning and heating more sparingly and judiciously; alter thermostats. (Likely to save about \$300 and 1500 kg of greenhouse gases in Perth).
- Plant deciduous trees on the West-facing aspect of the house and business. (Every tree will save about 1000kg of emissions over its life and provide shade in summer and light in winter)
- Always buy energy-efficient (and water-efficient) appliances, even if they cost slightly more at the time of purchase.
- Install a solar hot water system; there is a \$500 rebate in WA and it will reduce water heating costs (approximately one fifth of the emissions of a standard electric storage water heater)
- Better-insulate your house and business.
- Retrofit your house and business premises to become passive-solar; include photovoltaic panels and grey-water systems.
- Have an energy audit of your house or office.

2. Reduce Transport Emissions.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Household Expenditure Survey calculates each household spends about \$139.25 per week on transport. Transport is responsible for about 34% of every individual's greenhouse emissions. Every litre of fuel saved reduces vehicle running costs by about \$1.00 and saves 2.8kg of greenhouse emissions.

- Walk or cycle.
- Where possible use public transport.
- Think about each trip in the car. Is it really necessary just now? Can I combine several things into one journey? Can I car-share for this trip or for any others I plan to make?
- Can I do away with a car? How many cars does this household/business really need? The RAC (WA) calculates that it costs an average of \$ 5000 a year to run a car when all costs including finance and depreciation are taken into account). If a new car is a 'must', think of fuel economy and maybe a hybrid.
- How you choose to drive makes a difference to emissions. Your local motoring organization website will offer tips on how to drive in an emission-minimizing manner, and on how to choose the lowest emission vehicle.

3. Think if it is possible to fly less frequently.

Fly with an airline that provides carbon offsets and include it with your ticket. Offsets do have problems (see 5, and the DEA website www.dea.org.au for discussion), so make sure it is with a government-approved offsetting organization.

4. Lifestyle.

- **Waste.** Recycle everything possible. (Saves about 1000kg of emissions per year). Minimise waste.
- **Food.** Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables (grow your own if you can). Buy local produce. Meat is climate-costly. Use a compost bin or a worm farm for scraps.
- **Buying.** Money is power; we have the power to decide how we spend it. Is this purchase really necessary? Think sustainability. Can I borrow, hire or share infrequently-used tools and gadgets?
- **Money.** Think about ethical investments. You can choose where your superannuation is invested.

5. Off-set the carbon emissions you cannot avoid.

The choice of offset needs careful consideration. There are plenty of scams about where the promoter profits and very little carbon gets saved. If choosing a tree-planting scheme, the trees need to remain alive and growing for many years. Carbon Neutral www.carbonneutral.com.au is worth looking at. Its offsets are tax deductible and it is well on the way to achieving government accreditation. Tree-farming for woodchips risks returning carbon to the atmosphere rather quickly.

MANY OF THE ABOVE ARE SIMPLE, COMMON-SENSE ACTIONS, EASILY-ACHIEVED IF ANY OF US WANT TO CARRY THEM OUT. THE FOLLOWING REQUIRE MORE WORK. THEY ARE NONETHELESS IMPORTANT BECAUSE INDIVIDUALS ARE ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF SOCIETY'S CARBON EMISSIONS GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REST. AS WE BECOME BETTER-INFORMED WE ARE EMPOWERED TO MAKE BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT KNOW THAT WE EXPECT THEM TO CHANGE.

6. Take time to educate yourself.

Sign on to www.planetark.org.au or another free daily environmental news service.

Sign on to www.realclimate.org to learn about the complexities of climate science.

Read "The Weather Makers" by Tim Flannery, Australian of the Year, and "Scorcher" by Clive Hamilton.

"Heat" by George Monbiot discusses how it would be possible for the UK to reduce its greenhouse emissions by 90% by 2030 without upsetting its economy. Much of it is appropriate for Australia too.

7. Become more environmentally-aware and more politically active.

Join and support two or more environmental organizations like the Conservation Council of WA, Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Greenpeace, etc etc. Donations are tax-deductible. Their publications are informative.

The environment and health are linked inextricably.

Contact and write to politicians from any party about your climate change concerns. Without serious government involvement, which includes legislative emissions reduction, a carbon tax, renewable energy targets and global participation, our individual efforts will be in vain. California is proving it can be done.

Think about joining Amnesty International, Oxfam and/or other non-political organizations concerned about global fairness and justice. Look at www.getup.org.au

8. Can you as an individual, your business, your Council or your club either form or become part of a local Climate Action Group?

Many people want to know what they can do to combat climate change; they may not have had access to the information you have received. ***Know you can make a difference.***

Bill Castleden November 2007

Dr Bill Castleden is Chair of "Doctors for the Environment, Australia" (DEA) and an Al Gore climate change presenter. DEA is a medical organization which seeks to educate the public and politicians about the health-damaging effects of global warming. It's Energy Policy and much more information about how to reduce our carbon footprint is available on the website www.dea.org.au. The material in this "Comment" is that of the author and not necessarily the views of DEA.

If you require any explanation of any of the above recommendations or wish to become more involved in the effort to take responsibility for your greenhouse gas emissions please contact Bill Castleden directly on 08 9757 6777 or via wmc@inet.net.au