

Make lifestyle choices to change the world

Why make changes?

Living in one big village means that everything is connected. The decisions we make in Australia can have an effect on the lives of others, often impacting the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world.

But this connectedness also means that there are simple changes we can make in our own lifestyles that can mean the impact is positive rather than negative.

There are lots of things that you can do that will reduce the impact that we have on the world.



There are solutions to pollution – but are we taking them?

It comes down to the choices that we make every day. It's choices like what you do with your money, what food you buy, the transport you use and how you vote.

Outlined below are a few ideas for change that, in your everyday life, can make a difference to the lives of others.

Environment

Whenever we get into our cars or use electricity, we are having an impact not just on our immediate environment, but on the health of the Earth.

That's because these activities produce carbon. Excessive amounts of carbon in the atmosphere have been linked to the Greenhouse Effect, rising sea levels and increased drought in countries like Ethiopia.

One-fifth of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions come from households. Energy use, car use and waste are the largest sources of household greenhouse emissions.¹

There are many things you can do to reduce your household emissions, like choosing the 'green energy option' on your electricity and gas bills or buying low energy white goods.

Saving energy will also save you money. It is estimated that energy-saving features, if used on all compliant Australian computers, would save around \$228 million each year in electricity costs. This would also cut annual greenhouse gas emissions by over 2,280,000 tonnes (CO₂ equivalent), which would be like taking more than 500,000 cars off the road!²

Click on the sites below to learn how to reduce your household's impact on the environment

Energy Smart

<http://www.energysmart.com.au/>

For tips and information about making your home and work energy smart.

Energy Star

<http://www.energystar.gov.au>

For an international standard on energy-efficient electronic equipment.

Green Power

<http://www.greenpower.com.au/>

For a national accreditation program that helps you choose a green energy supplier.

Save Water

<http://www.savewater.com.au/>

For ways to save water around the home.

Planet Ark

<http://www.planetark.com/>

For simple suggestions to cut down the amount of waste your household produces.

Getting around

The Australian transport sector accounts for 14.2 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions. About 88 per cent of these come from road transport like cars, trucks and buses.³

Australian Greenhouse Office

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/>

For lots of common sense actions that you can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when you're getting around.

Travel Smart

<http://www.travelsmart.gov.au/>

For information about how you can change travel and transport behaviour.

Ethical consumption

The products that we buy and use in Australia also have an impact on people in other countries.

Many of the goods we use are made or grown in developing countries. Sometimes

these have been made by workers who receive low pay or must work in dangerous conditions, or even by child labourers.

Farmers who grow products like coffee or cocoa may not have received a fair price for their products. The processes that went into making the product may have been environmentally damaging.

We can buy products that are produced according to ethical labour and environmental standards.

For example, we can choose to buy fair trade coffee and tea because the fair trade label ensures that the workers who grew the crops were paid a living wage and had good working conditions.

Click on the sites below to inform your shopping choices.

Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand

<http://www.fta.org.au/index.htm>

The Fair Trade Association (FTA) administers the Fair Trade label. While tea, coffee and chocolate are some of the only fair trade products available in Australia at the moment, more will be available in a wider range of shops. Keep up-to-date with developments on this site.

Oxfam Trading

<http://www.oxfamtrading.org.au/shell/index.asp>

Oxfam Trading sell a range of ethical products, including fair trade tea, coffees and chocolates, and handcrafts produced by communities in developing countries who received a fair price for their products.

Waste wise shopping guide

<http://www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au/www/default.asp?casid=3435>

Search for products made from recycled content by category, postcode, product or company name.

Ethical investment

Australians are increasingly choosing to invest their funds in an ethical way. The increase in ethical investment funds makes this more possible – such funds use positive and negative ‘filters’ to select companies for investment.

Negative filtering mean avoiding companies that make money from industries that involve particular negative activities. These could include animal exploitation, the manufacture of armaments, poor labour conditions, environmental degradation, gambling, tobacco or uranium.

Positive filters might include any socially responsible policies, partnerships or labour practises that a company has.

Ethical Investor

<http://www.ethicalinvestor.com.au/>

For information on ethical investment opportunities and developments.

Ethical Investment Association

<http://www.eia.org.au/>

For individuals and organisations to learn more about how they can become socially responsible investors.

Make your vote count

Every time we vote in an election, we are supporting the policies of the party we vote for – including their policies on things like overseas aid, global rules of trade and labour standards.

Before you vote, make sure you know the policies of the parties you are choosing between, and how these policies would impact the poorest people.

Australian Council for International Development

www.acfid.asn.au

For information on the current aid budget and Australian policies related to global issues.

Australian Council of Social Service

<http://www.acoss.org.au/>

For analysis of Australian social policy by the national peak council of the community welfare sector in Australia.

Endnotes

¹ Australian Greenhouse Office (4 August 2004) *Community and household* [Online] Available at: http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/community_household.html

² Energy Star (4 August 2004) *What is Energy Star?* [Online] Available at: <http://www.energystar.gov.au/what.html>

³ Australian Greenhouse Office (4 August 2004) *Community and household* [Online] Available at: <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/transport>