

Living Sustainably

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Save Water

- Use AAA+ taps, showerheads, cisterns and appliances
- Fix leaks and drips as soon as they occur
- Install rainwater tanks with a first flush device; substitute rainwater whenever you can: cold water in bathrooms, clothes washing, toilet flushing, gardens and swimming pools
- Allow gaps between paving, so water goes into the ground instead the stormwater drain
- Install tanks or infiltration pits to retain stormwater on site
- Drought proof your garden with appropriate indigenous plants and mulch; water only when necessary, using rainwater
- Untreated greywater (from bathrooms and washing machine) can be used for under-surface drip watering systems in the garden
- Recycled (treated) greywater can be used for toilet flushing and laundry

Use Renewable Energy

- Buy accredited green power
- Install a solar hot water service
- Use solar space heating
- Use solar clothes drying (a clothes line or rack, not an electric dryer)
- Install solar panels on the roof
- Use gas rather than coal based electricity where possible - it produces about a quarter of the emissions of coal based electricity



Living Sustainably

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The world in which we live is at risk. How we live affects the rest of humankind and the rest of creation.

We cannot expect the Bible to give us direct guidance about the greenhouse effect, global warming and environmental sustainability. Part of our discipleship, however, is to reflect on the great themes of the Christian faith and the Bible, the themes of God the creator, God the provider, and creation's praise of God, and relate these themes to the important environmental issues of our time, including our own lifestyle.

We believe in God as Creator. This faith statement requires us to relate to the world in a responsible and respectful way. It is a reminder that the whole created order is "good", as Genesis 1 says.

God is Provider. We plant crops and harvest them. We mine minerals, refine them and make goods from them. We harvest timber. We dam water and pipe it to taps. And so on. We do not, however, create the seeds we use, the soil they grow in, the minerals we use, or the water or air on which our lives depend.

The world and the living communities within it are irreplaceable. If damaged, they are beyond our capacity to make or repair. God's gift of the environment is to be cherished.

Affluent civilisations have lost their sense of wonder, awe and providence. We have lost our sense of dependence on the world that has been given to us. Our nations have been encouraged to produce more, buy more, consume more. We take more and more from the earth, and dump more and more waste back onto the earth, the air, the oceans.

The result is air, soil and water pollution, rising water tables and increased salinity of the soil in both urban and rural areas as well as global warming (which increases the temperature of both air and oceans). Quality of life is decreasing as a result of road congestion, too many consumer choices and too little time for family, community and recreation.

Our lifestyles are unsustainable for the planet. If everyone in the world lived as Australians do, it would require several planets to support us all. We need to reduce our impact, our "ecological footprint".

We can take action. This fact sheet suggests some ways.

Water

Whether you live in the city or the country, water is a major issue. We can make a difference by what we do with water that actually falls on the house and garden where we live. See it as a gift from God.

In Sydney in 2003-4, the average consumption of town water per person per day at home was 247 litres.

Each year, 50% more water is lost from Sydney through stormwater runoff and waste water disposal than is supplied to Sydney as townwater.

The main uses around the home are usually lawns and gardens, showers, washing machines and toilet flushing. We can reduce this waste.

Energy

Climate change is a serious problem that will accelerate over time. We need to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases that are produced to provide us with energy.

Use low energy transport

A large part of the energy that households consume does not appear on gas or electricity bills – it is used in transport. Reduce petrol consumption, use public transport and walk more.

Reduce energy consumption

- Use energy efficient light bulbs and appliances
- Turn off appliances at plug instead of using “stand by”
- Maximise natural light
- Insulate to reduce the need to heat and cool the house
- Set heating and cooling to moderate temperatures appropriate to the season. Don't waste energy turning summer to winter and winter to summer
- Heat or cool only areas of the house that are being used
- Shade windows from summer sun and let in maximum winter sun, eg. external blinds, awnings or shutters
- Cross ventilate the house and use ceiling fans instead of air conditioning
- Seal windows and doors against winter draughts
- Use curtains and pelmets to keep a still body of air around windows in winter
- Have good ventilation around the fridge and set the temperature correctly
- Use cold water in the washing machine
- If you have a swimming pool, don't run the filter longer than is necessary

Water heating is responsible for more than a quarter of the greenhouse gases in the average home.

The use of energy-efficient products by households has the potential to reduce their energy-generated greenhouse gas emissions by between 43 and 54%. This would reduce Australia's total emissions by about 5% annually. (Greenhouse Office)

The average Australian home now uses about 1625 kwh of electricity per quarter. This means they create about eight tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. An average household in NSW uses 23,100 megajoules of gas per year.

About two thirds of energy is used for water heating and space heating/cooling. Energy efficient housing can reduce energy use considerably.

Lighting generates almost 25 million tonnes of greenhouse emissions each year in Australia. That's over 1 tonne per person. We can do better.

Waste

Australians generate about one tonne of solid waste per person per year, which goes to landfill. Waste from each household produces about 1.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

Garbage also wastes the resources, water and energy that went into manufacturing the items.

- *Reduce* the amount you buy. That is, consume less
- *Avoid* objects and materials that are toxic or wasteful of energy, water and other resources. For example: some paints are toxic; soft drinks waste water and energy in their manufacture and transport
- *Use* “low impact” materials and products (low energy and low waste in their manufacture, packaging, distribution and disposal)
- *Re-use* – clothes, appliances, furniture and many other goods should be re-used until the end of their useful life
- *Re-cycle* everything that can be recycled (and don't pollute recycling with objects that cannot be recycled). Use a compost bin or worm farm for green waste
- *Buy* products made of recycled material
- *Discard carefully*. Don't litter or poison the environment.
- *Manufacture* from recycled aluminium uses 96% less energy than producing new aluminium and from recycled paper uses 60% less energy than paper direct from timber

Audit

Use your water and energy bills to audit your consumption and monitor your progress. Review what you buy, use and throw away.

Set as a first aim to reduce your water and energy use and your garbage production to the average. When you reach this target, aim to reduce your consumption further each year.

Building and Renovating

Large quantities of resources and energy are consumed in manufacturing building materials. About a third of all garbage in Australia is from building and demolition.

- The NSW Government now requires a BASIX certificate for buildings and will soon require it for renovations. See this as an opportunity, not an imposition
- Use materials that minimize the resources and energy used in their manufacture

For more information and live links to key websites that provide expert help on how to do it, see the [UnitingCare NSW.ACT web resources on sustainable housing](http://unitingcarenswact.org.au/sustainable_housing/index.htm) at :

http://unitingcarenswact.org.au/sustainable_housing/index.htm