



time to act

everyday tips to help protect
the environment

Introduction

This booklet was originally produced to mark the occasion of Australia hosting the United Nations Environment Programme official World Environment Day events on 5 June 2000.

The theme for World Environment Day 2000 was *2000 the environment millennium - time to act*. This is a call to all of us to make a few changes in our daily lives for the benefit of the environment. Many of these changes can also save us money.

In this booklet you'll find a few tips on easy things that you can do around the house, at work or school, or when you are enjoying Australia's beautiful natural environment. Let's make every day world environment day.

Time to act: conserve our biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life forms. It includes humans, plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms, and the genes that they contain.

But biodiversity is more than the life in the bush or the oceans and rivers. It has many important functions: it gives us food and medicine, produces oxygen, breaks down our garbage, and cleans up our sewage...to name a few! There are many things we can do to conserve biodiversity for the future.

Do something Do something

Create habitat for native animals: Plant local native species in your garden and add logs and rocks to create habitat for native animals.

Leave dead wood in the bush: Get your firewood from a timber yard, and remember to ask for plantation timber. Birds and animals live in dead trees and logs. Collecting firewood from the bush robs them of their homes.

Use pesticides and herbicides sparingly: If you must use pesticides in the garden, opt for those made from natural ingredients, such as pyrethrum. Birds, frogs and reptiles can become sick or die if they feed on insects sprayed with pesticides.

Remember to put the cat in: Keep your domestic cats inside at night, put bells on their collars, and have them desexed. Native animals do most of their feeding at night and can easily become extra food for pets.

Join a community group in your local area: Volunteer your time to do on-ground, office or coordination work to help revegetate your local area. Get involved in tree planting, seed collection and weed control. Contact Landcare, Greening Australia, the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers, or the Threatened Species Network to find out more.

Learn about your environment: Visit national parks, botanical gardens or a zoo in your area and learn more about your environment. Take your friends with you.

Drive carefully: Watch out for native animals when driving at dusk and dawn, particularly in bush areas.

Care for the bush: Make sure that all campfires and cigarettes are properly extinguished before leaving the bush, and remember to take your rubbish with you.

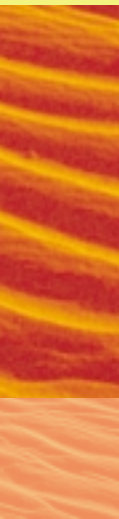
Be informed before you fish: Find out which species you can take home for dinner and which you should throw back in. Take only what you need and leave the undersized ones for another day. Call your local fishing authority to find out more.

Care for wildlife: Learn how to help injured wildlife by contacting the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service or the RSPCA.

Try to use plantation timber: Buy plantation timber instead of native forest or woodland timber, if you are building or renovating. This will help conserve the forests and woodlands.

Dispose of garden waste carefully: Weeds, prunings and grass clippings dumped in the bush can introduce or spread weeds.

Take note when travelling overseas: Be careful about what you buy overseas and bring into the country as you may be buying into illegal trade in wildlife.



Time to act: clean up our atmosphere

Cars and sprawling cities affect our air quality. In fact, motor vehicles are the single greatest source of air pollution in cities, which means that we can make a big difference simply by changing a few of our driving habits.

Some gases, such as carbon dioxide, are called 'greenhouse gases' because they absorb infrared radiation emitted by the earth's surface and so keep the planet warmer than it would otherwise be. This is called the 'greenhouse effect', which keeps the earth at a temperature capable of sustaining life. The concentration of greenhouse gases has increased significantly during the past 200 years as a result of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels and land clearing. This has led to the 'enhanced greenhouse effect'.

Some greenhouse gases, such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons, are also 'ozone depleting substances'. These substances break down and thin the ozone layer. Since the ozone layer absorbs a lot of the sun's UV radiation, thinning of the ozone layer means that more UV radiation can reach the earth, which leads to a higher incidence of skin cancer.

The greenhouse effect and ozone depletion are global issues, but there are lots of things we can do to help solve these problems at the source.

Do something Do something Travel

Use your car efficiently: Reduce air pollution and save petrol money:

- lighten your vehicle's load: clear out the boot and remove roof racks if not needed
- drive smoothly instead of braking at high speed
- ensure your tyres are filled to the maximum recommended air pressure
- have your car serviced regularly.

Choose a less polluting car: Read the Federal Government Fuel Consumption Guide before buying a new or second hand car. It is available from motoring organisations, Energy Information Centres, car dealers, and www.greenhouse.gov.au/transport/fuelguide.

Switch to unleaded petrol or alternative fuels: If you have a pre 1986 car you might be able to use unleaded petrol. Alternative fuels such as LPG and CNG are generally cheaper, as well as being better for the environment. Seek advice from your motor mechanic, vehicle manufacturer or distributor.

Use alternatives to cars: Walk, ride a bike, or catch public transport instead of driving. Think about whether you can use the telephone instead of going out in the car or organise to car pool with neighbours or friends.

Create an alternative transport friendly workplace: Set up a car pool register and ask management to install facilities for cyclists.

Leave your car at home: Leave the car at home one day every week—if everyone did this it could make a huge difference.

Rethink your work travel choices: Consider alternatives such as video and telephone conferencing, use of email/internet, facsimile and telephone to cut your organisation's travel bill and make huge greenhouse gas savings.

Follow some car air conditioner tips: If your car was manufactured before 1994 it will probably have a refrigerant in its air conditioning system which is harmful to the ozone layer. Make sure your vehicle's air conditioner is serviced by a certified technician. Ask if refrigerants will be recovered and recycled during servicing; have all leaks repaired; run your air conditioner weekly in winter to keep the seals lubricated; and consider converting your vehicle's air conditioner to a non-ozone depleting substitute.

At home

Burn your woodheater efficiently: Save money and cut down on smoke:

- burn dry, seasoned, untreated wood
- stack wood under cover in a dry, ventilated area
- use small logs
- burn the fire brightly
- don't let it smoulder overnight
- open fire places are especially inefficient; use them only on special occasions.

Control the temperature of your home

—without electrical appliances:

- seal cracks and gaps, fit dampers to fireplaces and block unnecessary vents to keep heat in

- shade windows from hot sun and install close fitting blinds or curtains with pelmets to keep the house cool—in extreme climates, look at installing double glazed windows
- when building or renovating, try to put in north facing windows to catch the winter sun and avoid unshaded roof glazing, large west facing windows and large skylights.

Choose energy efficient appliances: Check the energy rating label when buying new or second hand electrical appliances. More stars mean less greenhouse gases and more energy bill savings for you. The Energy rating web site will help you select energy efficient appliances: www.energyrating.gov.au



Use your electrical appliances wisely: Save money and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by:

- washing with cold water and only when the washing machine is full
- use your clothes dryer only when absolutely necessary
- switch off your television, VCR and computer when not in use
- fit low wattage globes and remember to turn off lights when leaving the room.

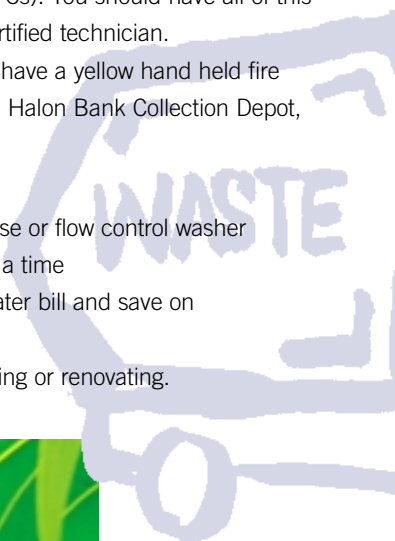
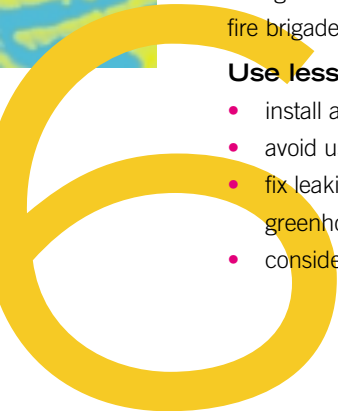
Find out about refrigerators and air conditioning systems: A lot of these, including car air conditioners, still use the ozone depleting refrigerants chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Newer air conditioning systems often contain the global warming substance, hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). You should have all of this equipment repaired and regularly serviced by a certified technician.

Return banned fire extinguishers: If you have a yellow hand held fire extinguisher (BCF) containing halon, deposit it at a Halon Bank Collection Depot, fire brigade or fire equipment supplier.

Use less hot water:

- install a Triple A-rated water efficient shower rose or flow control washer
- avoid using only small amounts of hot water at a time
- fix leaking hot water taps to reduce your hot water bill and save on greenhouse gases
- consider gas or solar water heating when building or renovating.

Time to act!
clean up our atmosphere



Time to act: reduce the waste you produce

One of the major threats to our environment is the amount of waste we produce. Despite considerable recycling efforts by Australians, there is still an awful lot of waste sent to landfill each year.

In fact, Australia is the second highest producer of waste per capita after the USA, sending 18 million tonnes to landfill per annum. This is equivalent to one tonne for every person, and it would be enough to cover the state of Victoria to a depth of 10cm all over.

There are many things that we can do to reduce waste.

Do something

Separate your garbage: Putting items in the correct bins, separate your garbage into paper and board, bottles and cans and cartons, and general waste. For information contact your local council.

Provide separate bins at your school or workplace: In classrooms, offices and in the kitchen put three separate recycling bins. One bin is for paper, another for organic waste, and the third is for cans and bottles. Make and display a poster explaining what goes in each bin to ensure that everyone understands how to use the system properly.

Buy less packaging: One third of domestic waste that Australians produce is made up of packaging materials, so think carefully about what you are buying.

Compost your kitchen and garden waste: Contact your local council to find out the best way to do this in your area.

Become a worm farmer: Worm farming is an alternative to composting. You might even consider feeding your organisation's organic waste to worms and then giving the castings to staff for their gardens. Contact your local council to find out more.

Use paper wisely: Think about whether you need all the paper you use. Look at using recycled paper and printing or copying on both sides of the sheet. Perhaps documents can be distributed by e-mail or on the internet instead of being printed. Editing can be done using the word processor on the screen.

Consider the environment when you buy products: Consider the following when next making a purchase for your organisation or the home:

- what is the recycled or remanufactured content of the product?
- can the product be reused or recycled when you've finished with it (for example printer toner cartridges or bottles)?
- how much packaging does it have?

Find out about your contractor's waste policy: Before hiring someone to do a job, consider their efforts in waste reduction, reuse and recycling.



Time to act:
reduce the waste you produce



Time to act: protect our wetlands and waterways

Wetlands and waterways provide habitat for wildlife, they can be breeding grounds for fish, and the source of life for entire communities—including humans. They are also often places of great natural beauty where we can enjoy a swim, cast a rod, or pitch a tent by the riverbank.

Though we are not always aware of it, everything that we do in our cities and in the country is eventually reflected in our water. When we drop litter onto the road, or pour chemicals and fertilisers down the drain they get washed into stormwater drains and into rivers or the ocean.

Do something

Take note of what goes down the drain: Don't put oils, fats or harmful chemicals down the sink—they will eventually end up in the rivers, lakes or oceans and harm our water quality and wildlife. Use a strainer in the kitchen sink to collect solids from your washing up water.

Conserve water: Install water conservation devices in the home, school and workplace. Triple A shower heads, flow restrictors on taps, and dual flush toilets can more than halve the amount of water you use, which will save you money too.

Use environmentally friendly cleaning products: Detergents with no or little phosphorus are better for the environment because phosphorus increases nutrient loads in rivers and can cause excessive algal growth and harm or kill aquatic plants and animals, as well as make waterways smelly.

Wash with water when camping: Don't use soaps or detergents in the river when camping, as this can upset the aquatic ecosystem.

Consider buying a front loading washing machine: They use much less water.

Minimise the use of fertilisers and pesticides in your garden and on your farm: They can find their way into waterways.

Plant trees or grass to reduce areas of exposed soil: This stops soil and fertilisers from being washed into waterways.

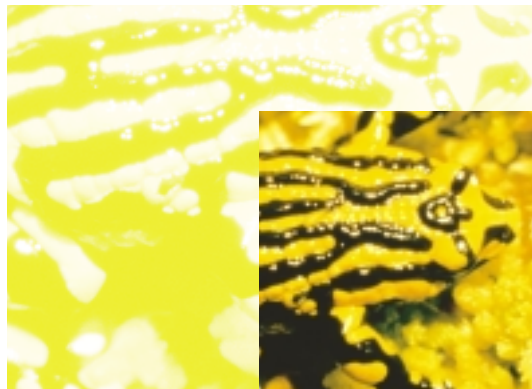
Wash your car on the lawn: Wash your car on the lawn instead of on the road to stop detergent getting into our waterways.

Plant native trees and shrubs along riverbanks: They will protect water quality and improve wildlife habitat. Remember not to plant Willow trees as branches can break off and grow elsewhere, clogging the river system.

Join a waterbird watching group: Enjoy what you have helped protect.

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and waterways**

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Time to act: care for our coasts

About 86 per cent of Australia's population live along the coastal zone. Declining marine and coastal water quality is one of the most serious issues affecting our marine and coastal environments. Each year, thousands of tonnes of sewerage effluent is discharged into estuarine and coastal waters. The challenge is to repair this type of damage as well as manage the coastal zone in a way that minimises further degradation. Whether we live on the coast or just visit on holidays, there are many things that we can do to help protect our coastal and marine animals and plants, as well as make sure that our coasts are places that we can enjoy for years to come.

Do something Do something

Stay off the sand dunes: Stick to the tracks and keep off the dunes—sand dunes are held together by the plants that grow on them and if these get pulled up or disturbed there is little to stop the sand from blowing away.

Leave rockpool animals and plants in the water: When looking around the rocks, put back any that you have overturned, as animals and plants will die if left out in the sun.

Be a seagrass friendly sailor: Be careful of using anchors, propellers and swing mooring chains when sailing across a sea bed as they can damage seagrasses if dragged along the bottom.

Stick to the laws: Find out about the laws affecting fishing or collecting coastal animals—and stick to them.


Dispose of your rubbish properly on land: Dispose of unwanted or tangled fishing lines, nets and bait packages on land as they can kill fish, marine mammals, birds and reptiles. Don't bury your rubbish in the sand as it will soon be uncovered by the tide, or animals or people's feet.

Time to act:
care for our coasts



Contacts and resources

Environment Australia
Community Information Unit
Freecall 1800 803 772
Web site www.environment.gov.au



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