



AUSTRALIAN
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

AN AUSTRALIAN GUIDE



COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION AN AUSTRALIAN GUIDE

Right now Australians from all walks of life are coming together to help reduce Australia's contribution to climate change. Action starts at home, but there's only so much we can do as individuals or families. To avoid dangerous climate change, we'll need larger scale action – led by government.

That's why communities around Australia are teaming up to ask their political leaders to do the right thing. They're also learning how to work with their local media and encourage others in their community to get on board.

The Australian Conservation Foundation hopes this booklet provides a helpful guide to community climate action in Australia.

Published by the Australian Conservation Foundation

First published July 2007

Updated September 2008

Reproduction in whole or in part may only occur with the written permission of the published.

For more information on the content of this booklet, please contact:

Phil Freeman - Climate Campaigner

Australian Conservation Foundation

Phone: (02) 8270 9909 Mobile: 0438 043 049

Tollfree: 1800 332 510

Email: p.freeman@acfonline.org.au

www.acfonline.org.au

CONTENTS

Climate Change - the nuts and bolts	4
Climate change – the problem	4
What is Australia’s contribution to the problem?	4
The future is in our hands	5
What will happen if we don’t take action?	5
How can we solve the climate crisis?	5
Australia’s natural role – a leader on climate change	6
Leadership from Government	6
Why should Australia be a leader?	6
True leadership on climate change means...	7
Some useful facts and figures	10
Action at home	11
Case study: simple savings at home	11
Making your voice heard – by those who represent you!	13
Step 1. Pick up the phone	13
Step 2. Get Ready! Preparing to visit your MP	13
Step 3. Do it! How to make the meeting a success	14
Step 4: After the meeting - feedback and follow-up	14
Talking to politicians – common questions and answers	15
Let the media be your messenger	17
Talkback radio tips	17
Local newspapers – waiting for your story	18
National and state newspapers - letters to the editor	19
Case study: Canberra Mothers Group	19
Working together – community climate action	20
Join or start a climate action group	20
Tips on running a local climate action group	20
Success stories: climate action groups around Australia	21
Organising community climate change events	21
Get your friends and family on board	23
Find out more	23
Attachment 1 - sample press release	24
Attachment 2 - community climate action checklist	25





CLIMATE CHANGE – THE NUTS AND BOLTS

Climate change – the problem

The earth's atmosphere is made up of a delicately balanced layer of 'greenhouse gases'. This layer acts like a blanket, trapping enough heat to sustain life.

Humans are burning huge amounts of fossil fuels – adding more and more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere and making this blanket thicker. This traps more and more heat, warming the globe and throwing our climate into chaos.

Climate change is already underway. The most recent (2007) report of the world's most authoritative body of climate scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹, confirmed that:²

- Temperatures have already risen 0.76°C over the past century and there is more than 90% probability that most of this global warming was caused by humans.
- Eleven of the last twelve years (1995-2006) rank among the 12 warmest years on record.
- Melting of glaciers and ice caps is already contributing to sea level rise.
- Many long-term changes in climate have already been observed. These include differences in Arctic temperatures and ice and changes in extreme weather events like droughts, heat waves and tropical cyclones.

What is Australia's contribution to the problem?

Per person, Australians are among the highest greenhouse polluters in the world. Even though Australia's greenhouse pollution is only a small proportion (1.5%) of global pollution, our total contribution is almost as high as the UK's which, with 60 million people, has a population three times bigger than ours.

Australia's greenhouse pollution is increasing and will get worse if we don't take action. The Government predicts our annual greenhouse pollution will increase 20% by 2020 and by 80% by 2050 (from 1990 levels), even with current policies.³ We should be reducing our pollution – not increasing – so there's obviously more work to do!

1 Approximately 2500 scientific experts were involved in the preparation and review of the IPCC reports.

2 Working Group 1 of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, see <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

3 See Australian Government, Department of Climate Change (2007), Tracking to the Kyoto Target, 2007, Australia's Greenhouse Emissions Trends 1990 to 2008-2012 and 2020. See also The Allen Consulting Group (2006), Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia, Report to the Business Roundtable on Climate Change, Melbourne.

The future is in our hands

Temperatures will increase further during the 21st Century. But the extent of change will be determined by how much more greenhouse pollution we put in the atmosphere.

In other words, the future is in our hands. It is crucial we take action to limit climate change to 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Beyond 2°C, scientists tell us climate change will become 'dangerous' and could spiral out of control.

If we choose to reduce pollution, we can keep temperature increases below the 2°C threshold. To achieve this goal, global pollution levels will have to be reduced by at least 85% by 2050. As a wealthy nation, Australia will have to do even more, achieving carbon neutrality before 2050. This should keep us under the 2°C threshold scientists say it would be dangerous to go beyond.

What will happen if we don't take action?

If we allow pollution to keep increasing (under a 'business as usual' scenario), scientists tell us average temperatures will rise up to 6.4°C by 2090. Climate change would spiral out of control – with terrible consequences for our children and future generations.

Australia would be right in the firing line of 'dangerous' climate change. An average temperature increase of just 2–3°C would result in:⁴⁵

- 97% of the Great Barrier Reef bleached every year, and severe stress and damage to other iconic natural areas like Kakadu and the Wet Tropics rainforests.
- Longer and more severe droughts (and water shortages), particularly along Australia's eastern seaboard and in the south-west.
- 40% reduction in livestock carrying capacity of native pasture systems.
- 5–10% increase in tropical cyclone wind speeds.
- 10% increase in bushfire danger in many parts of the country.
- Vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever spreading south if effective control measures are not instituted.
- Population displacement due to rising sea levels, heavier floods and more intense droughts.
- Increased vulnerability of ecosystems, with as many as 15–40% of species facing extinction.

The future is in our hands. If we take strong action now, we can avoid a climate crisis.

How can we solve the climate crisis?

Avoiding dangerous climate change has become Australia's greatest challenge. We can still rise to the challenge and protect our planet for future generations – but only by taking strong and urgent action to reduce greenhouse pollution.

Fortunately, Australia is in the perfect position to be a world leader on climate change.

We need to stop wasting energy and become much more energy efficient. 'Doing more with less' will save our economy large amounts of money – by reducing fuel and infrastructure costs.

We can use these economic savings to help us move to clean, renewable sources of energy. Australia is blessed with abundant sources of renewables – like solar, wind, geothermal and biomass.

4 IPCC 2007, 'Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change', Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Geneva, accessed at <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM2feb07.pdf>,
5 Preston, B.L. and Jones, R.N., 2006, 'Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions', CSIRO, Aspendale, accessed at http://www.businessroundtable.com.au/pdf/BRT-on-CC_Climate_Impacts-CSIRO.pdf, March 2007.

We also have abundant reserves of natural gas, a useful ‘transition’ fuel. While natural gas isn’t carbon neutral, it creates far less greenhouse pollution than coal.

Coal industry proposals for geosequestration or ‘carbon capture and storage’ are problematic because they rely on the development of new, expensive technologies. These technologies won’t be commercially available for another 15 or so years. They should be seen as a possible future part of the solutions mix, not the ‘silver bullet’ solution to climate change.

There’s also been much made of the role nuclear reactors could play in reducing Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions. Nuclear reactors are too slow, too expensive, and too dangerous to make a real difference on climate change. Uranium mining and nuclear reactors are not carbon neutral, and the radioactive waste produced would be a poisonous and deadly legacy for many generations to come.

Both coal and nuclear power require large amounts of water – in a country that is becoming drier because of climate change.

It makes sense to focus our efforts on cleaner energy solutions that are proven and available to us right now. That means better energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Australia’s natural role – a leader on climate change

Australia is in the perfect position to lead global efforts on climate change. Leadership means setting a good example and actually reducing our greenhouse pollution – not refusing to act unless all other countries do so first.

We enjoy a tradition of taking a leading role on the global stage, whether in times of conflict, or on the sporting field.

We’re wealthy and our economy is strong. We have abundant sources of renewable energy and the expertise needed to develop a smart and sturdy renewables industry. It’s often said Australians ‘punch above our weight’. That’s why many other countries around the world are closely watching Australia to see what we do about climate change. Our response to climate change won’t just change our own contribution to the global greenhouse pollution problem – we can set a smart and successful example for the world to follow.

Leadership from Government

We all have a role to play – a shared responsibility – in addressing climate change. Already, millions of Australians are making changes in their lives to save energy and water at home. But there’s only so much we can do as individuals or families – it’s time for politicians to step up to the challenge as well. To avoid dangerous climate change, we need a Government that is prepared to take a leadership role.

The Government is the only body that can establish a framework that maps out what business and communities need to do. Like any set of achievable goals, this framework needs two things – timelines and targets.

Why should Australia be a leader?

- It’s a natural role for Australia - we’ve always punched above our weight.
- We have huge potential – especially in renewable energy. If we can’t give this a fair crack, why should anyone else?
- We have the most to lose from inaction. Australia without the Great Barrier Reef or Kakadu would be a much poorer country for future generations.
- An early and smooth transition is by far the best course of action for our economy. We still have time to get back on track: act now, or pay later.
- We owe it to our children, to give them a smart and healthy Australia for generations to come.

True leadership on climate change means...

A wide range of policies and measures will be needed to solve the climate crisis. But there are four basic measures that provide the foundation for any serious plan of action.

1. Cut greenhouse pollution
2. Show international leadership
3. Promote a clean, renewable future
4. Get energy smart – which includes:
 - Greening our homes
 - Investing in public transport

Cut greenhouse pollution – legally binding national targets

Australia should pass a national law to cut greenhouse pollution by at least 30% by 2020 (from 1990 levels), and achieve carbon neutrality before 2050.

An effective plan needs a clear goal. That's why Australia needs to adopt national targets to reduce greenhouse pollution.

Unfortunately, our pollution levels are still increasing – the Government's own projections are that pollution will increase by 20% to 2020. We need to turn this around within 3 years and then start making reductions in greenhouse pollution.

We need to set targets according to science – not politics. Our objective should be to avoid warming of more than 2°C, since the impacts past this point become severe and irreversible (IPCC, Stern, CSIRO). Scientists tell us that we will need global reductions of at least 50% by 2050 (from 1990 levels) to stay below 2°C.⁶

Australia will need to make reductions that are 'better than average', because:

- We're a wealthy, developed nation
- We have high levels of pollution per person, and
- We've been responsible for relatively high 'historical' levels of pollution over the last 100 or more years.⁷

It's easy to adopt 'aspirational targets'. But what happens if we fail to meet them? That's why targets must be legally binding: on the government, on us all.

⁶ Recent science has found global emissions must fall by around 55% of 1990 levels by 2050 in order to stabilise CO₂e concentration at 400ppm and minimise the risk of exceeding 2°C to 8 - 57%. Meinshausen M. (2006) 'What does a 2oC target mean for greenhouse gas concentrations? A brief analysis based on multi-gas emission pathways and several climate sensitivity uncertainty estimates' Published in 'Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change' UK Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs page 270 accessed at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/research/dangerous-cc/index.htm> May 2007

⁷ In accordance with the principles of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, developed countries must aim for higher targets since they have contributed to 76% of emissions to date and have much higher per capita emissions. World Resources Institute (2005) 'Navigating the Numbers' accessed at http://pdf.wri.org/navigating_numbers_chapter6.pdf March 2007



It is important Australia sets a 2020 target to reduce its greenhouse pollution (as well as a 2050 target), because:

- The earlier we act, the smoother and cheaper the transition to a 'low-carbon' society
- If we only have a 2050 target, many polluters will be able to carry on with 'business as usual' for decades. We can't let pollution keep rising for 10 or 20 years, then discover we are way off target to avoid dangerous climate change.

Any emissions trading scheme needs to set greenhouse gas emission limits for polluters, known as 'caps', that will help us meet these targets. A trading scheme without strong and binding caps will simply deliver 'business as usual' - which is an increase in our greenhouse pollution.

Be a leader in the global community

Australia should lead negotiations on a new global climate treaty which sets the world on a course to keeping global warming as far below 2 degrees as possible, and ensure Australia is the first country to ratify the new treaty

Climate change is a global problem that needs a global solution. But that shouldn't be used to justify a 'wait and see' approach by Australia.

The Kyoto Protocol was formed in 1997, setting in place a commitment timeframe and targets to tackling climate change. Australia's ratification of the Protocol in December 2007 means that we have to meet our first commitment period obligations of greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2012.

But the Kyoto Protocol was never intended to be a complete solution to climate change - just the first step. International negotiations are now underway for the second commitment period, which commences in 2013. Australia is in a key position to play a responsible leadership role on the global and regional stage, by:

- Setting targets to reduce greenhouse pollution by at least 30% and commit to increase Australia's target to a 40% reduction if other wealthy countries do the same, by 2020.
- Supporting developing countries in tackling climate change by jointly implementing clean energy projects and sharing new technology that reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
- Establishing an emissions trading scheme whereby countries that have excelled in reducing their emissions can sell surplus emissions 'credits' to another country which has not met its Kyoto target.

By sending international signals of responsibility in tackling climate change, Australia can lead in the ongoing negotiations for the post-2012 commitment period. Showing our dedication to curbing dangerous climate change will encourage more countries, particularly developing countries like India, to join the global effort.

Boost renewable energy

Australia should legislate a renewable energy target of 25% by 2020; and ban new power stations that use old, dirty coal technology. Nuclear power should be rejected as being too dangerous, too costly and too slow to address climate change.

Instead of our energy generation being dominated by dirty coal-fired power, Australia could become a world leader in safe, clean energy. Renewable energy now meets 19% of global electricity demand and countries around the world are setting targets for energy from clean, renewable sources such as solar, wind and geothermal.

Renewable energy is booming in countries that have adopted specific policies to support it. Those countries are gaining a competitive advantage in the booming renewables sector.

Australia has great solar, wind, biomass and geothermal resources. But at present we only get a modest 8% of our electricity from renewables and that proportion isn't increasing. We are being left behind by others that have adopted smart targets for renewables, such as California's target of 33% by 2020, and China's target of 16% by 2020.

Any scenario for deep cuts in greenhouse pollution involves renewable energy growing rapidly to deliver a large share of electricity needs. A 25% by 2020 renewable energy target for Australia, combined with medium energy efficiency measures, would deliver

- 16,600 new jobs
- \$33 billion in new investment
- 69 million tonne reduction in electricity sector greenhouse emissions (almost as much as the total emissions from road transport)
- Enough renewable electricity to power every home in Australia.

Get energy smart

Australia needs to set world's best energy performance standards and establish a priority package of efficiency measures to cut energy waste and deliver all cost-effective energy savings.

Energy efficiency is the quickest and cheapest way to cut greenhouse pollution, particularly over the next 10 years. This makes major energy efficiency measures an essential part of any serious plan to tackle climate change and reduce greenhouse pollution. A range of smart technologies exist that use a lot less energy to deliver the same (or better) service to consumers. Becoming energy smart will save on household and business energy bills and help protect Australians against the impact of energy price increases as we clean up our energy supply.

A comprehensive Government review in November 2003 found we could immediately reduce our energy use by up to 30% using off-the-shelf cost-effective technologies, with an average 'payback' of four years.¹ Australians deserve world's best energy performance across the board, from homes and appliances to vehicles and industry.

Green our homes

Australia should establish a massive new \$1 billion a year national effort to retrofit Australian homes - providing innovative financing solutions that encourage investment in water and energy efficiency measures, including proper insulation, solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks.

Energy and water efficiency can make our homes more comfortable, save money on household bills, reduce our contribution to climate change and help reduce pressure on our stressed rivers and water infrastructure.

Most people want to do the right thing. But many don't know where to start or don't have the spare cash to invest. This is where governments come in. Governments can help Australian families make their homes water efficient and energy smart.

Invest in public transport

Australia should establish a national transport program that invests in urban public transport infrastructure, reverses the current bias towards roads and ensures carbon costs are considered in all transport decisions.

Accessible public transport networks linked with safe cycling and pedestrian routes are essential ingredients to a healthy, connected and sustainable city. Public transport and active transport are safer, more efficient, healthier and more environmentally sound than the currently dominant mode of single-passenger vehicle transport. Urban development in Australia has created a situation where the car is for many people the only viable way to get around.

Australia's over-dependency on the motor vehicle is a problem of national significance, requiring national solutions. Our national Governments have traditionally invested in roads, but not public transport – which they have left exclusively to State Governments. This needs to change.

If you'd like more detail on policies, download ACF's National Policy Agenda and detailed policy briefs: www.acfonline.org.au/nationalagenda

Some useful facts and figures

Here are some useful facts and figures on climate change to keep in your back pocket:

- Australia's greenhouse pollution is projected to increase 20% by 2020, and by 80% by 2050 (from 1990 levels) - even with current policies.⁸
- If average temperatures increase above the 2°C 'dangerous' threshold, 97 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef will be bleached every year.⁹
- If we allow global greenhouse gas pollution to keep increasing (under the 'business as usual' scenario), scientists tell us average temperatures will rise up to 6.4°C by 2090.¹⁰
- Australia can achieve a 60% reduction in greenhouse gas pollution while maintaining strong economic growth, with real GDP averaging 2.1% per annum through to 2050 if early action is taken. In comparison to early action, delaying action to reduce pollution until 2022 would result in lower real GDP growth through to 2050, and concentrate any disruptive shocks to the economy.¹¹
- Australia gets less than 10% of its energy from 'renewables' – and the proportion isn't increasing. The EU has adopted a target of 21% renewable energy by 2010, and California has a target of 33% by 2020.
- A 25% by 2020 renewable energy target would create 16,600 new jobs for Australians, generate \$33 billion in new investment and create enough renewable electricity to power every home in Australia.¹²
- A comprehensive Government review in November 2003 found Australia could quickly reduce our energy use by up to 30% using off-the-shelf cost-effective technologies, with immediate economic benefits and an average 'payback' of four years.¹³ Greenhouse pollution from energy use would also be reduced 30%!

8 See Australian Government, Department of Climate Change (2007), Tracking to the Kyoto Target 2007, Australia's Greenhouse Emissions Trends 1990 to 2008-2012 and 2020. See also The Allen Consulting Group (2006), Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia, Report to the Business Roundtable on Climate Change, Melbourne.

9 Preston, B.L. and Jones, R.N., 2006, 'Climate Change Impacts on Australia and the Benefits of Early Action to Reduce Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions', CSIRO, Aspendale, accessed at http://www.businessroundtable.com.au/pdf/BRT-on-CC_Climate_Impacts-CSIRO.pdf, March 2007.

10 IPCC (2007) 'Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change' accessed at <http://www.ipcc.ch/SPM040507.pdf>

11 The Allen Consulting Group (2006), Deep Cuts in Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Economic, Social and Environmental Impacts for Australia, Report to the Business Roundtable on Climate Change, Melbourne.

12 See A Bright Future: 25% Renewable Energy for Australia by 2020, available at: http://www.acfonline.org.au/uploads/res_a_bright_future.pdf

13 Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Working Group (2003) Towards a National Framework on Energy Efficiency – Issues and Challenges Discussion Paper, November 2003





ACTION AT HOME

The average Australian household is responsible for 14.7 tonnes of greenhouse pollution each year.¹⁴ Fortunately, there are many steps you can take at home to reduce your contribution to climate change. We've put together the following table to help you weigh up potential actions and see how much you can achieve – and save!

Some actions will cost more up-front than others, but will end up being cheaper in the long-term. Remember, as you reduce your greenhouse impact, you'll also be reducing your electricity and petrol bills. Each tonne of greenhouse pollution you save will also mean a savings of between \$130 and \$470 on your annual electricity or petrol bill.¹⁵

Once you've taken action at home, you'll be able to show others how it's done so that they too can save money and help save the planet.

Case study – simple savings at home

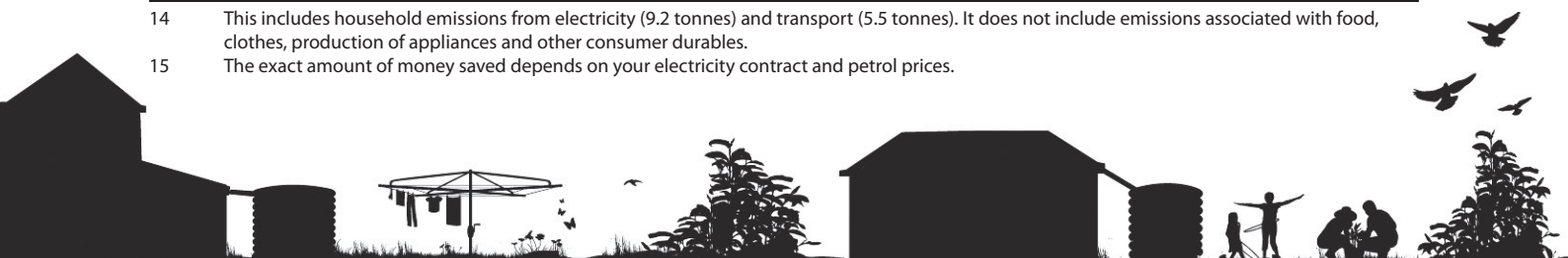
Clare wanted to green her home, but husband Nick was hesitant about the cost. First up, they decided to reduce their energy use (and bills) by making some simple changes at home.

'We use a power pack with individual switches, so we can leave the DVD and VCR off when we're just watching TV and turn off all appliances on standby at the wall. We installed a water efficient showerhead and low-flow tap aerators and put lagging (insulation) on our hot water pipes. In winter, we cover ourselves with a blanket while watching TV and use a hot water bottle at night in the bed,' says Clare.

With these easy steps, they reduced their energy bill by 25%. Nick was then happy to invest the savings in 100% accredited GreenPower. Before they knew it, their home energy supply was clean and green - without a noticeable increase in their energy bill.

14 This includes household emissions from electricity (9.2 tonnes) and transport (5.5 tonnes). It does not include emissions associated with food, clothes, production of appliances and other consumer durables.

15 The exact amount of money saved depends on your electricity contract and petrol prices.



Household – hot water	Tonnes saved per household ¹⁶	% of total household greenhouse pollution saved ¹⁷
By reducing the temperature on your electric hot water system by as little as 5 degrees you can reduce energy consumption by between 3% and 5%	0.15	1.0%
Clothes washing - Wash clothes in cold water instead of hot water	0.48	3.3%
Install a water efficient showerhead - this will save you water and energy	0.44	3.0%
Install a solar hot water system (this will make all your hot water 'carbon neutral') ¹⁸	3	20.4%
Household – other electricity savings	Tonnes saved per household ¹⁶	% of total household greenhouse pollution saved ¹⁷
Heating and cooling - reduce your thermostat setting by one degree. A thermostat setting of 10-20 degrees in winter and 26 degrees in summer should be comfortable. An extra one degree difference in temperature between the inside and outside can add around 10% to heating and cooling costs and greenhouse emissions	1.5	10.2%
Insulation - install roof and ceiling insulation and save up to 45% on heating and cooling energy	0.7	4.8%
Clothes drying - get rid of the clothes dryer and use a clothes line or a drying rack instead!	0.15	1.0%
Standby appliances - turn off all appliances at the wall. An appliance 'on standby' generates about 45 kilograms of CO2 a year.	0.75	5.1%
Household – choose accredited GreenPower¹⁹	Tonnes saved per household ¹⁶	% of total household greenhouse pollution saved ¹⁷
GreenPower - purchase 10% accredited GreenPower	0.74	5.3%
GreenPower - purchase 100% accredited GreenPower	7.74	52.7%
Transport	Tonnes saved per household ¹⁶	% of total household greenhouse pollution saved ¹⁷
Drive less - reduce car travel by 20 kilometres a week	0.3	2.0%
Avoid one domestic flight	0.5	3.4%
Buy a fuel efficient car	2.1	14.3%
Give up the car all together. Use public transport, walk and ride.	4.2	28.6%

As you can see, it's easy to achieve a 30% reduction in greenhouse pollution in your home life. Surely we can achieve the same goal as a nation by 2020!

For more information on greening your home, see ACF's GreenHome website:

www.acfonline.org.au/greenhome

¹⁶ Sources are ACF Greenhome Guide 2006 and the Federal Government's "Global Warming - Cool It" booklet 2006.

¹⁷ Percentages are based on an average Australian household of 2.6 persons, responsible for 14.7 tonnes of annual greenhouse pollution. Source: ACF Consumption Atlas.

¹⁸ NB - installation of a solar hot water system will make your entire hot water use "carbon neutral", meaning that above actions to reduce hot water consumption will not produce additional greenhouse savings.

¹⁹ NB: % savings from GreenPower will be lower if some or all of the above steps are taken to reduce electricity use - but so will your electricity bill!



MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD – BY THOSE WHO REPRESENT YOU!

Right now, one of the most important things you can do about climate change is to phone or visit your Federal representative.

Politicians receive lots of emails and letters. But when a local voter takes the time to personally call or visit face-to-face, they're much more likely to listen.

At first the idea of meeting with a politician might seem daunting, or simply 'not my cuppa tea'. But remember, politicians are ordinary people, with families, work pressure – and often a mortgage too! They represent you and should want to hear your views. They need to hear from ordinary Australians like us - not just industry lobbyists!

Here is a four-step guide to meeting your MP.

Step 1. Pick up the Phone

If you're not sure who your MP is, you can find out via the Australian Electoral Commission: www.aec.gov.au/eresearch/ or phone 132 326. Once you know your electorate, you can find contact details for your MP at: www.aph.gov.au/house/members/mi-elctr.asp

Phone the MP's office, ask to talk to the diary secretary and make an appointment for a meeting. You will need to explain clearly that you are a local constituent who wants to see the MP about Australia's response to climate change.

You may be asked to write a letter to the MP, setting out your concerns and asking for an appointment. It's best to write an individual letter, but you can find a sample letter (that you can edit and send) at: www.acfonline.org.au/climateaction

Be polite but persistent – it might take a few attempts to get your appointment! Don't forget you have an important issue to discuss and your MP is there to represent you.

Step 2. Get Ready! Preparing to visit your MP

Find out who you're talking to - Find out about your MP and what motivates them. What is their work background? What are the issues they have addressed recently? What are their personal interests – and do you share any of them? Do they have a family? Think of ways in which climate change is relevant to them and their work.

Decide on what you want to talk about - Read below and draw on your personal experiences to decide on the top three points you want to get across during the meeting. Practice them – preferably on a friend or family member. If you can, write a short summary of your main points and take it with you to give to the MP. It should be concise – bullet points are good and no more than a page.

If you're feeling nervous, think about teaming up with friends and family or other people in your community who share your concerns. Your views will carry more weight if the MP knows they are shared by others.



Step 3. Do it! How to make the meeting a success

Most politicians aren't experts on climate change. Politicians will be most interested in your personal perspective and concerns. Why do you believe climate change is such an important issue? How does it affect you personally? Tell them!

MPs are busy people. Make sure you arrive on time. Be concise and pleasant, and try not to waffle or repeat yourself.

Keep it simple and honest. You don't need to be a climate change expert. You do need to be clear and genuine.

Stick to your key points. Don't be led off on a tangent – make sure you get answers to your questions.

Make it personal - Tell your MP about the actions you have already taken, e.g. purchasing 100% accredited GreenPower, or greening up your home life and transport choices.

Let your MP know of others in the wider community (e.g. your workplace, sports club or hobby group) who feel the same way you do.

Be tidy, polite and genuine. Make notes.

Ask your MP to take one or two concrete actions and follow them up. For example:

- To talk to a more senior politician, like the Prime Minister, relevant Minister (like the Ministers for Climate Change, Environment or Energy, for example, or the Treasurer), or the leader of Opposition.
- To get back to you with an answer on a specific question.
- To agree to a follow-up meeting, or to come and talk to your local sports club, school or community group.

Congratulate your political representative when they support an initiative that you think is beneficial. Thank them for the meeting (and any action they offer to take) and make it clear you are going to keep in touch!

Step 4. After the meeting – feedback and follow up

Make some more notes straight after the meeting so that you don't forget.

- What did you say, and how did the MP respond?
- Did you have any problems?
- What do you think worked well?
- How do you feel the meeting went overall?
- Would you do anything differently next time?
- Do you have something to follow-up on?
- Is the MP going to get back to you about something?



Follow-up is extremely important. If a politician hears from you just once, they might think they've solved the problem. If they keep hearing from you they'll know your concerns are serious and genuine and they'll be more likely to take action to address them. And if you get family, friends and workmates to contact them also, they will really pay attention!

It's also a good idea to write back to the MP thanking them for the meeting and outlining what you discussed - particularly reminding them of any undertakings they may have made to you. Don't let them forget!

Share your experience so others can prepare to meet their MP: www.acfonline.org.au/mymp



TALKING TO POLITICIANS – COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Want to know how to respond to tricky arguments that your MP might make? Here are some tips on how to deal with some of the possible responses you may get from politicians.

Household costs and petrol prices - “We know how much stress Australian working families are already under - the Government doesn’t want to do anything that will hurt the family budget.”

- The real solutions to petrol prices are cleaner cars and public transport. Use an example from your own community - do you need better public transport or bike paths?
- Let’s make it easier for working families to access solar panels, energy efficient appliances, and insulation, to reduce energy bills - especially by providing assistance to retrofit old homes.
- I am willing to pay more for electricity and petrol if Australia is effectively reducing its emissions to help secure a future for our children. I wouldn’t be happy to pay more if our carbon pollution continued to increase - we need a fair AND effective response.
- The new \$100,000 means test for solar panel rebates makes it very difficult for working families to do the right thing - I hope that the means test will be removed and that a national feed-in tariff is introduced!

“A 30% reduction in carbon pollution by 2020 would destroy our economy” OR “Power stations will go broke and shut down.”

- If we don’t significantly reduce our carbon pollution as a global community, the effects of climate change will destroy our environment which is the backbone of our economy. We have to act now.
- This is what the science tells us that we need - 3,000 of the world’s best scientists on the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say that wealthy countries like Australia need to reduce carbon pollution by 25-40% by 2020.



“We need to be slow and steady” OR “We’re on track to meet our Kyoto target...We are spending \$X billion on climate change programs.”

- Climate change is a crisis and we’re on the brink of committing ourselves to dangerous, runaway climate change. We can’t delay further.
- “If we wait to see if an ailment is indeed fatal, we will do nothing until we are dead.” (Tim Flannery, ‘The Weather Makers’, p7)
- The IPCC has indicated that global emissions need to peak by 2015 and decrease by 2-3% per year, every year after that, until 2050. 2015 is only 7 years away.
- During World War II, between 30% and 60% of the GDP of western nations was spent on war efforts, to secure a safe future - climate change is a comparable danger, but nowhere near the same scale of commitments is yet being seen.

“Australia is only a small player and a small contributor to the problem. China and India are the real problem and we’re working closely with them.”

- Australia has to play its part and lead by example. I would be proud to live in a country that took world-leading action on climate change.
- If a relatively small but very wealthy country like Australia can’t reduce its carbon pollution rapidly, how can we credibly ask poor but large countries like China and India to do the same?
- The average Australia is responsible for about 13 times as much carbon pollution as the average Indian, and 6 times the average person in China. We are also much wealthier - so it should be easier to us to reduce our carbon pollution.

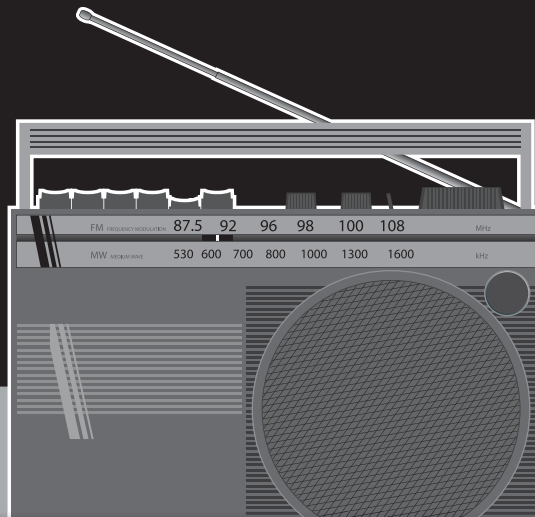
What about jobs? “The coal industry employs so many people, we need to protect it” OR “Carbon-intensive industries will move offshore, taking jobs with them.”

- Many feared that computers would displace thousands of workers from their jobs and that widespread unemployment would result, but the result was instead a more efficient, productive workforce with new jobs emerging in fields which previously did not even exist. The same can happen with a fair transition to a clean, renewable economy.
- New renewable energy and new, green collar jobs means a better future for our children.
- If we don’t start making that transition now to a renewable future and irreversible climate change occurs, think of all the jobs that will be lost - tourism fishing on the Great Barrier Reef, farmers in the Murray Darling Basin, and so on.

“I’m a climate sceptic.”

- Just like the link between smoking and lung cancer, don’t you think it pays to err on the side of caution, especially when the stakes are so high?
- The vast majority of Australians are extremely concerned about climate change and want to see a response that is based on science, not politics. It’s about our children’s future.





LET THE MEDIA BE YOUR MESSENGER

Your voice counts and you don't have to be an expert to have an opinion. It's free and easy to present your views about climate change to newspapers and radio stations. In the following sections we've provided information on how to:

- Call talkback radio.
- Write an article or opinion piece for your local newspaper. Let local journalists know what you're doing at home and in the community.
- Respond to articles in major newspapers by writing a letter to the editor.
- Get involved with your local community radio station.

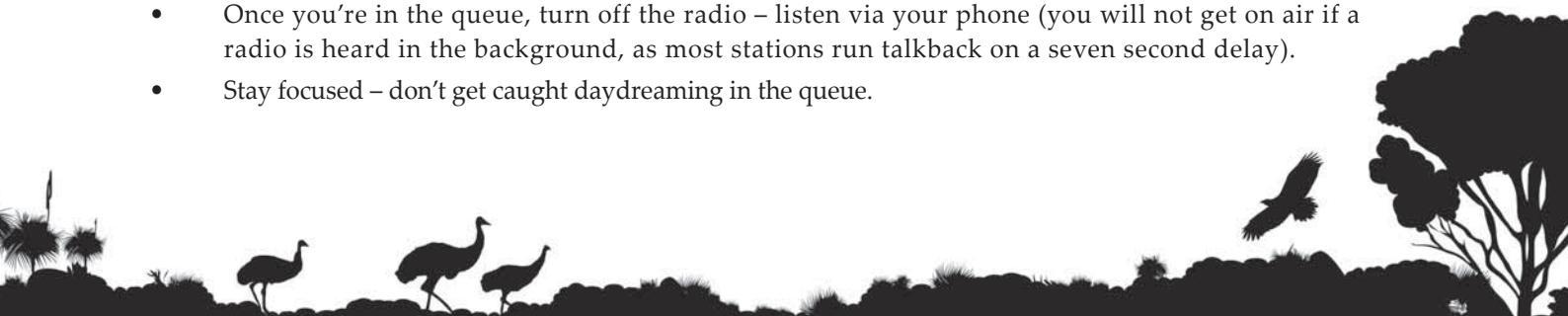
You can find your radio and newspaper contacts using the postcode locator at: www.mediabay.com.au

Talkback radio tips

Talk-back radio reaches a huge audience so it's a good place to spread the word and call for action on climate change. Political parties also monitor talkback radio to get a feel for what issues and views are widespread in the community. Remember, you don't have to be an expert to have an opinion.

Before you call:

- Have the radio station's phone number ready. Most stations prefer a land line to a mobile phone.
- Find out about the show – find out which calls work best and what the presenter likes and dislikes.
- Prepare key points, but don't read them out – talkback is about people airing and exchanging views, not about reading prepared speeches. Try practising by talking through your key points with a friend first.
- When you ring in, you will first speak to a producer who will want to know what you plan to say. You will then either be placed on hold until there is a slot for you to speak, or they might call you back.
- Once you're in the queue, turn off the radio – listen via your phone (you will not get on air if a radio is heard in the background, as most stations run talkback on a seven second delay).
- Stay focused – don't get caught daydreaming in the queue.



When you're on air:

- Get to the point. You'll probably only get about 30 seconds on air.
- Remember, the person you are trying to convince is the listener, not the talkback host. If the presenter is being provocative, don't bite back (even if you want to!). It's the presenter's job to play the devil's advocate. Take a moment; think about different ways you could reply and what would sound best to the listener.
- Keep it friendly. If you're polite even in the face of a presenter or guest who's being abusive, you will appear better for not having taken the bait.
- Avoid unduly personal comments about the host, guest or other individuals. What you say about someone on air, even in the heat of the moment, may be defamatory. You cannot convince anyone if you alienate them.
- Don't just let off steam. Give information so listeners can take action. Relax and be natural. Don't think of it as an interview, but a conversation.
- Wait until the announcer/guest has finished speaking before you speak again. If you try to interrupt you may not be heard.
- Think about the audience; who's listening at home or at work? Are they commuters, families, teenagers or retirees? What would be most likely to convince them? What effect would you like to have on them?
- Have one or two main points. Have your written points nearby as a prompt, but resist the urge to read them out.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Being on air makes some people nervous. Be careful not to speak too fast.
- Don't overstay your welcome. You don't have to stay on air for as long as you can. Make your point as clearly and concisely as you can, then be ready to say goodbye.

Local newspapers – waiting for your story

Local newspapers are a great way to communicate with people in your community.

- Find out which reporters are interested in the environment and climate change. Don't be afraid to call them and introduce yourself – good reporters are keen to build up their contact list.
- Be ready to tell them why you're special – and of course you are! If you're a parent in the community, represent a different culture or have started a climate action group, let the reporter know why you're personally involved in this issue.
- Let them know what you're doing to reduce your greenhouse pollution – especially if it is part of a community or school project.
- Tell them in advance about any events that you're planning – an invitation is always an excellent reason to contact the media! If the reporter can't make it, let them know how the event went.
- Develop stories that you can 'pitch'. Reporters will be more likely to take on a story when it has a local flavour, an interesting character involved, or something unusual is happening. Think about how best to give the reporter all the ingredients needed for a good story.

National and state newspapers - letters to the editor

When it comes to national and state newspapers, you can be involved by writing a letter to the editor in response to anything that gets reported. You can send your 'two cents worth' in by email or fax.

- Keep letters short (50 to 150 words) – sharp and witty pieces have a much better chance of getting published.
- Be timely – try to get your letter in on the same day the story you're commenting on has appeared.
- You can be audacious – but not abusive. Newspapers won't print anything defamatory and your letter would only have the effect of putting people off.
- Again, think about who reads this paper and what would be most likely to convince them. Most newspapers will publish information about their readership online.

Case Study – Canberra Mothers Group

In March 2007 a group of 20 mothers in Canberra decided to get better informed about climate change. They were interested in what they could do at home and what governments needed to do too. Following a presentation to the whole group, several mothers decided to team up to do two things:

1. Organise a delegation to express their concerns to one of their state's Senators.
2. Send out a media statement to bring attention to the meeting and their concerns.

Mums' delegation

ACTION: To prepare for the meeting, the mothers put together a two page information paper to present to the Senator (and to use as talking points in the meeting). This included a five point action list, and supporting arguments to explain why these actions were necessary, achievable and affordable. In addition, the mothers prepared a specific action request for the Senator – they would ask him to communicate their concerns to the Prime Minister.

RESULT: The mothers group was able to present a clear and informed case for action to the Senator based on a written document. They were also prepared and able to question responses that argued against action on climate change. The prepared document also left them free to honestly express their motivations and concerns as mothers, without trying to act as climate policy experts. The Senator was polite, but quite dismissive when it came to taking any action...

Mums and the media

ACTION: Initially the mothers were not keen to seek media coverage – they weren't sure they had the knowledge to discuss climate change policy in the media. However, with their carefully thought-through information paper for the meeting, and with each other for support they felt confident and prepared enough to give it a go.

They sent out a media statement and were offered a drive-time radio interview. They prepared for the interview by deciding on one simple but clear message – that they as mothers promised to do their bit and they wanted more leadership and effective action from government.

RESULT: The drive time interview lasted seven minutes and was heard by an audience of over 7000 people. It focused on their concerns as mothers for their children and the health of the planet in which their kids would live – rather than the details of climate policies. Many other listeners were inspired to call and send in text messages supporting them. The great response prompted the Senator to phone in and defend himself!

The mothers had a small victory because they were prepared to be brave and make contact with the local media. In the end, the media and listeners didn't care that they weren't climate experts. Instead, everyone wanted to know what motivated them – as ordinary mums – to take this action.

ONE MORE TIP: The Canberra Times would have been interested in doing a story (with a photo) if they had been given more notice – at least two days prior. The statement could have been sent to the journalist earlier 'under embargo' – that is, with an agreement to hold off on publishing the statement until after the interview – after making a phone call to the newspaper to find out who was the right person to send it to.



WORKING TOGETHER – COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

Join or start a climate action group

Around the nation Australians are connecting, teaming up and pushing for climate solutions via local climate action groups. To find your nearest group, or learn how to start your own group, visit the website: www.climatemovement.org.au

If you're a young Australian, you can get involved with the Australian Youth Climate Coalition at: www.youthclimatecoalition.org

Tips on running a local climate action group

Meetings:

- Set regular meetings in advance. A calendar of meetings will help members plan their schedules and enable more people to attend.
- Set an agenda for each meeting and make sure the ideas developed in each meeting are recorded and then shared with the entire group.
- Establish the following roles:
 - Facilitator - to ensure everyone sticks to the agenda.
 - Timekeeper - people need to get home, so make sure you don't go over time!
 - Minute taker - it's easy to forget key decisions and task allocations, so write them down and email them to everyone after the meeting. It doesn't need to be a blow by blow account – just the decisions and who's doing what is plenty.
- A good idea is to make every fourth meeting a more 'social' event and meet at the local pub or café – this is great for attracting new members and remembering to have some fun as well!

Goals and planning:

Planning and goal setting are very important, and will help measure your success and keep the group on track. Agree upon your objective – what do you stand for, what do you want to achieve? Develop a 'mission statement' which includes; what you do, who is involved and the changes you are working towards.



Name and identity:

Choose a name for your group. When you have a few committed members you may wish to register your group as an 'incorporated association'.²⁰

Have a group launch/fundraiser:

Organise an event that will raise awareness of your group and its goals. This will help promote your group in your local area and provide an opportunity for media attention. Our advice is to keep these local and family-friendly. Examples include: film screening, trivia night, theatre show, dinner at a local restaurant with an invited speaker.

Success stories – climate action groups around Australia

- Bayside Climate Action²¹ (near Melbourne) organised 3000 people to make a human sign on their beach. It featured on national television!
- Climate Action Bondi²² held a Climate Action Festival and film screening. Through donations and sponsorship they raised nearly \$12,000 for solar panels for their local public school.
- Energy for Eternity²³ is based in Bega (the cheese capital!) and now has local groups in Eurobodalla, Snowy River and Braidwood. They have organised many successful events, raising money for clubs like Tathra Surf Life Saving Club to install solar and wind power. They have also convinced Bega and Eurobodalla Shires to adopt local targets of 50% energy reduction and 50% renewable energy by 2020.

Organising community climate change events

Community events are a great way to help others find out more about climate change. By holding a social event you can draw in people from the community who wouldn't normally come to a public meeting.

- Hold a social event like a film screening, trivia night, sporting match, concert or theatre show. Decide what type of event you do by what skills you have in the group – if you have a number of keen cricket players from the local team, consider a charity match to raise some funds for the group. If you have some people with theatre experience, put on a play.
- Request one of Al Gore's Climate Project presenters to come and give a live Australian version of the Inconvenient Truth slideshow. This is a great way to help others in your community get more informed about climate change. See www.acfonline.org.au/climateproject
- An event can be a really fun way to raise some funds. As well as charging a ticket price you can also hold raffles or auctions on the night. One school raised \$1000 by auctioning inventions they made from recycled materials! Food is also a good way to raise some money, especially if there are some good cooks in the group. It may be easier to raise funds if you have a specific goal in mind, e.g. to raise money for a solar panel for your local school or community centre. Check out www.solarschools.net
- Keep an eye out for community events where you might be able to set up a side-event or a stall. Visit your local council website to see what else is happening in your area.

20 Contact your relevant State Government department, e.g. the Office of Fair Trading in NSW.

21 <http://baysideclimatechange.net>

22 <http://www.climateactionbondi.com>

23 <http://thebegavalley.org.au/cefe.html>



Make a splash:

Let everyone know about your event! Some of the best ways to publicise your event are:

- Tell your friends and family. A small gathering will become a major event when your mother shows up with her 40-strong gardening committee! Not only can friends and family boost your numbers, you can also ask them to help set out chairs, direct others, clean up...
- Ask your local shops to display posters in their windows, or give out fliers at other community events. Keep an eye on paper waste though.
- Drop an invitation to other community groups. They will remember getting started themselves, and be happy to give you support.

Contact local media:

Get the word out! Prepare a short media release and invitation, and send it to editors of local publications and newspapers. Call them to make sure they received it, and you can also ask for the most appropriate journalist to talk to.

Get your local representatives involved:

You can also send an invitation to your MP. This is a great way to begin a relationship between the local MP and your climate action group, and letting them know that your group has formed!

There may be opportunities to seek small amounts of funding through community grants, via your local council.

Ask for a meeting with your local Member of Parliament, and discuss your concerns with them.

Take pictures:

You can then use your pictures for your website, newsletters, and promotional materials for your next event or fundraising requests.

Keep in touch:

Set up a contact list. Collect contact details of interested people/supporters and send them an interesting email-newsletter to keep them informed of your activities. Don't forget to acknowledge any support you've received from others! You could also set up your own simple website with an email contact. It's also a good idea to establish a bank account and get a PO Box for snail mail.

Why not share your ideas with other community groups around Australia? Register your group at www.climatemovement.org.au and start blogging!

Some more community climate action ideas:

Here are a couple more ideas to help galvanise support in your local area and show people that there is something they can do about climate change:

Organise a community challenge and get people working together towards a target.

- For instance, you could aim to reduce greenhouse pollution in your town by 10% over the next year, or 30% in the next 3 years.
- Get the local paper on board and create a central register measuring how much energy households have saved.
- If it is a success in your town you could challenge a neighbouring town to beat your record.

Get your friends and family on board

Finally, don't forget about the people who are closest to you! Be proud of what you're doing about climate change and encourage your friends and family to get involved too.

Find out more

Here are just a few of the places where you can find out more on climate change:

- ACF's climate campaign: www.acfonline.org.au/climate
- Show you care about climate change at www.whoonearthcares.com.au and forward a link to all your friends
- Join the online action team at www.getup.org.au
- Book a presentation by an Al Gore – ACF Climate Project presenter at www.acfonline.org.au/climateproject
- Australian Youth Climate Coalition: www.youthclimatecoalition.org
- Check out ACF and Channel 7's Cool the Globe campaign: www.cooltheglobe.com
- Climate movement: www.climatemovement.org.au
- Climate Indy Media www.climateimc.org
- Community climate action resources: www.rainforestinfo.org.au/climate/resources/



MEDIA RELEASE

[day and month] 2008

CANBERRA MUMS WANT URGENT ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

A group of Canberra mothers will take their concerns about climate change to a meeting with Senator # at 1.30pm today.

They all have young children and want a positive and sustainable future for their kids. They're concerned that the Government isn't doing enough to rein in greenhouse gas emissions and is not acting quickly enough.

The women would like to see Australia doing 'the right thing' on its own shores as well as participating internationally to effect dramatic reductions in emissions - they say it's not only charity that 'begins at home'.

And just as they don't accept their kids saying, "I won't share because he/she won't share", they have little time for the Government's line of "They won't, so we won't" when it comes to committing to targets.

The women will ask Senator # to take a 3-point call to action to the Prime Minister and report his response back to them.

The women meeting with Senator # are [NAMES].

Contact: [NAME]

Phone: [Mobile number]

Email: [Email address]



Attachment 2 - Community Climate Action Checklist

Action	Details	Who/What/When?	Follow up
AT HOME			
Take action at home to reduce your energy bill and climate impact by 30%	See pages 11 - 12 of this Community Climate Action Guide for tips		
Shift to cleaner transport	Walk, cycle, and use public transport		
COMMUNITY			
Establish or support a local community climate action group	What things do we want to do in the next 6 months? Which are the highest priority? What do we need to do these things? Where and when is best to meet? How will we communicate between meetings? Do we want to have a media event to let people know we exist?		
Organise an Al Gore Climate Project Presenter to talk at your school, church or club	www.acfonline.org.au/climateproject		
Visit your Federal Member of Parliament and rival candidates	See pages 13 - 17 of this Community Climate Action Guide for tips		
Encourage my workplace, school, club or church to reduce energy use and switch to certified GreenPower			
MEDIA			
Write to newspaper editors	Monitor state and local media How can I link this issue with climate change? Can I make my letter short? Is there a funny angle on my comments?		
Call talkback radio	If I got 20 seconds on air what would I want to say? How can I personalise this issue? Are there any personal anecdotes I can use?		
INDIVIDUAL			
Show "I care" about climate change	www.whoeonearthcares.com		
Switch to 100% accredited Greenpower at home	www.greenpower.gov.au		
Sign up for Walk Against Warming	www.walkagainstawarming.org Organise for your family, school, church or club to join the walk!		



The Australian Conservation Foundation is committed to inspiring people to achieve a healthy environment for all Australians.

For 40 years we have been a strong voice for the environment, promoting solutions through research, consultation, education and partnerships.

We work with the community, business and government to protect, restore and sustain our environment.



AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

FLOOR ONE, 60 LEICESTER STREET CARLTON VIC 3053
phone ■ 03/ 9345 1111 // facsimile ■ 03/ 9345 1166

SUITE 504, 32 YORK STREET SYDNEY NSW 2000
phone ■ 02/ 8270 9900 // facsimile ■ 02/ 8270 9988

LEVEL ONE, 96-98 LAKE STREET CAIRNS QLD 4870
phone ■ 07/ 4031 5760 // facsimile ■ 07/ 4031 3610

120 WAKEFIELD STREET ADELAIDE SA 5000
phone ■ 08/ 8232 2566

PO BOX 2699 CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601
phone ■ 02/ 6257 1657

www.acfonline.org.au

Authorised by Don Henry, Executive Director,
Australian Conservation Foundation,
Floor 1, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton VIC 3053