



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

The Advertiser

10 STEPS TO HELP YOU KICK THE CO₂ HABIT



By University of Adelaide climate change Professor **BARRY BROOK**

SOLVING climate change is a huge international challenge. Only a concerted global effort, involving the governments of all nations, will be enough to avert dangerous consequences. But that said, the individual actions of everyday people are still crucial. Large and complex issues, like climate change, are usually best tackled by breaking down the problem into manageable bits. For carbon emissions, this means reducing the carbon dioxide (CO₂) contribution of each and every one of the 6.5 billion people on the planet. But what can you, as an individual person or family, do that will most make a difference to the big picture? Here are my top-10 action items, which are both simple to achieve and have a real effect. They are ranked by how much impact they make to "kicking the CO₂ habit".

MAKE CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS POLITICAL DECISIONS

1 Some commentators said the 2007 federal election was the first to be influenced by the stance taken by competing political parties on the issue of climate change.

Regardless of how true this may be, it is obvious the action needed to combat climate change would require a healthy dose of political will and courage.

This willpower comes from voters, who consistently demand real action and can see through "greenwashing" (pretend solutions and half measures).

Climate change should be a totally non-partisan issue since it affects all people and all countries. If climate change is not perceived by both sides of politics as a "core issue", it will inevitably be marginalised by ostensibly more pressing concerns. So assess policies clearly, and make your vote count towards real climate solutions - each and every election.



EAT LESS RED MEAT

2 Traditional red meat comes from ruminant livestock such as cattle and sheep. These animals produce large amounts of methane, which is a greenhouse gas that packs 72-times the punch of CO₂ over a 20-year period. Other types of meat, such as chicken, pork or kangaroo, produce far less emissions.

A consumption, emissions from beef would easily outweigh the construction and running costs of a large 4WD vehicle, in less than five years. There is no need to cut out red meat entirely, but fewer steaks and snags mean far less CO₂.

PURCHASE "GREEN ELECTRICITY"

3 The future of energy is clearly in the form of renewable sources such as solar, wind, wave power and hot rocks. Even without climate change, there are limits to available oil, natural gas and coal.

"Green power" is electricity that comes from renewable technologies, but is delivered to you in the same way as dirty power from fossil-fuel burning: that is, down your power lines.

You can buy enough to replace your entire energy usage, or some fraction (I recommend going for 100 per cent; the cost is a few more cents per kilowatt hour of electricity). Most energy suppliers now offer this service. As more people take up this scheme, it will drive investment and reduce the cost of development.

MAKE YOUR HOME ENERGY EFFICIENT

4 We all unwittingly leave lights on when we are not in a room, switch off the TV by the remote control instead of at the wall, fire up the heater when we could put on an extra layer of clothing, or turn on the air conditioner when we only need to open a window and turn on a fan. It's force of habit - a bad habit we can break, with just a little thought.

Behaviour change lies at the heart of most individual actions on reducing our individual carbon footprint. By being sensible about your household energy use, and making sure your house is well insulated, you can make a huge dent in your CO₂ emissions.

Oh, and it will save you plenty of money that you no longer spend on wasted energy.

BUY ENERGY AND WATER-EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

5 Aside from behavioural change, we can invest in more sensible technologies that help us in our day-to-day lives. When buying new electronic appliances, air conditioners or washing machines, look at their energy and water usage.

The more energy efficient they are, the more they'll save you in the long run, and the lower their CO₂ impact will be.

In most cases the "payback period" - the difference between the initial cost of a high-versus-low-efficiency appliance and the long-term savings in electricity and water bills - is only a matter of a few months to a few years. After that, you are laughing all the way to the bank.

WALK, CYCLE OR TAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

6 Cars are not only a slow way to get to work when you're faced with a city gridlock, they are also a huge user of oil (which is running out globally) and cost the taxpayer hefty amounts in road building and maintenance.

Getting people from A to B using trains, buses, bikes and on foot is much more greenhouse friendly and often

cheaper. The main problem right now with public transport is that not enough people use it.

There is not enough investment by government to improve the quality of service and capacity to support large volumes of commuters.

It might seem like a Catch-22, but some cities have solved the dilemma and now move most of their people about on public transport. So, start patronising your public transport network and push governments at all levels for some decent bicycle and walking trails instead of building more roads and worrying about fuel costs.

The transition to a new transport system has to start with each and every one of us.



RECYCLE, RE-USE AND AVOID USELESS PURCHASES.

7 We throw too much away and still recycle too little of what we must discard.

Large amounts of energy and water go into producing endless amounts of "stuff", much of which we don't really need or use. So be sure to use your local recycling service for plastics, metals and paper.

Try to get appliances and tools fixed rather than replaced - the carbon footprint of fixing things is far lower than making them from scratch. Avoid the temptation to buy useless trinkets, just because it feels good to accumulate things.

There are limits to everything including, most importantly, the ability of the planet to supply people with raw materials. Think sustainability.

TELECOMMUTE AND TELECONFERENCE

Do you really need to fight your way through traffic each day, just to sit at your office desk and work on your computer?

Do you need to fly to a business meeting in another capital city in order to talk to your colleagues?

Or can you think inventively and make best use of the benefits of the internet to do some of this remotely?

Telecommuting can be an effective

way of doing paperwork in your home office, and more and more employers are seeing the benefits of this and embracing the concept.

Teleconferences mean fewer wasted aeroplane trips which create a huge CO₂ burden. It can't always be done, but even fewer trips, here a lid there, make a big difference. As with the other 10 points, it is about making smart and informed choices.

BUY LOCAL PRODUCE

9 Food miles are now firmly part of the new carbon lingo. This is a way of expressing how far an item of food has travelled before it reaches your dinner table, and therefore how much CO₂ has been emitted during freighting.

A better concept is probably "embodied energy", which takes account of all the carbon, water and energy that goes into producing any food or manufactured item. Either way, a good rule of thumb is that if you buy something that has been produced locally, it will usually have a lower CO₂ tag attached to it and help the economy. Your local fresh food market is a good place to start for your food shopping. Buying Australian-manufactured and grown products is another carbon-friendly option.

OFFSET WHAT YOU CAN'T SAVE

10 Avoiding the release of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases, in the ways described above, is by far the best and most direct way of reducing our climate change impact.

Yet some emissions are unavoidable. For those, offsetting is a worthwhile option. This is done by purchasing "carbon credits" from accredited companies, which will then invest those dollars in renewable energy projects or planting trees.

Carbon offsets should definitely not be seen as the solution, or as a relatively pain-free way to expel your carbon guilt.

There is nowhere near enough offsetting potential in the world for this to be an option for most of the world's population.

But in conjunction with other methods of kicking the CO₂ habit, offsets can help make a difference and allow you to pay a small penance.



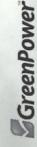
How to reduce your impact on climate change.

Every time you turn on a household appliance, greenhouse emissions are released into the atmosphere. If you think of them as black balloons, the average household produces around 160,000 of them each year. But you can do something about it.

By using less energy or using green energy you can reduce your greenhouse gas emissions and in turn your impact on climate change.

Use less hot water - install a water efficient showerhead. Use cold water when washing clothes.

Consider installing a solar hot water system or investing in grid-connected photovoltaic cells. Or probably the easiest way to make an immediate impact is to switch to GreenPower.

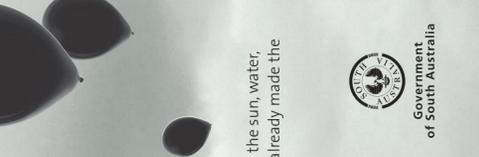


GreenPower is electricity generated by using renewable sources like the sun, water, wind and waste. Almost 70,000 South Australian households have already made the switch to GreenPower.

Isn't it time you did? Talk to your current energy supplier or visit www.greenpower.gov.au for a list of retailers.

Use less energy. Use green energy.

www.climatechange.sagov.au



Each of these balloons represents 50 grams of greenhouse gas.

The average household produces around 160,000 black balloons each year.

The more GreenPower you use, the more balloons you save.

