



Eco-footprint action

A guide to reducing your ecological footprint and building resilient communities

Sustainable Communities South Australia Inc.

www.sustainablecommunitiessa.wordpress.com

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Tel. 08 8363 2295

Email bmylius@chariot.net.au

Royston Park, South Australia 5070

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Sustainable Communities SA

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Our ecological footprint is a measure of how much land we require to produce the resources we use and to absorb our wastes.

Worldwide (on 2003 calculations) there were 1.8 hectares of arable land available for each person on the earth. In Australia we are using far more than our share – in fact our lifestyle requires about 7 hectares or almost 4 planet earths. In 2009 the world-wide human population is projected to use 140% of the resources the earth can generate in a year. To find out how much land area it takes to support your lifestyle, go to Global Footprint Network, www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators and discover your biggest areas of resource consumption.

In making a plan to reduce your use of resources, set goals around gradual improvements. Spectacular leaps are impressive but lasting changes in the way you use energy, food, water, transport and dispose of waste are likely to be achieved in small steps. One of the best ways to do this is to set goals.

Why are goals effective?

They focus you - they make you identify exactly what it is you want to do

They commit you - when you set a goal you make a commitment towards achieving it

They motivate you - you are more likely to put effort and energy into achieving a goal you have set yourself.

Make a start; here is an example of setting a goal

Today's date	
My eco-footprint in hectares per annum (calculated using the Footprint Network Calculator)	
I will aim to reduce my footprint by 10%	
I hope to achieve this by (date)	

By setting goals in each of the areas, you will be able to take stock of the changes you have already made and the changes you intend to make. It is also useful to regularly acknowledge the changes you have made as a result of setting your goals and to note these down too.

Clearly, there is a lot to be achieved if we are to reduce our global footprint and we cannot do it all at once or on our own. Perhaps the most important ingredient in reducing our ecological footprint is to work with others - our households, our neighbours and our local communities - to share our valuable experiences, skills, knowledge and time and to learn from those around us.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Getting to know your neighbours and becoming active in your local area not only makes you feel safer and happier, it can also save time and energy and even money. But most of all it helps you feel connected and gives you a sense of belonging in the community as part of a larger group of committed people.

Step 1: Start by carrying out a quick scan of your relationships in the local community

How many neighbours do you know by name in your street? _____

When was the last time you attended a local community event? _____

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below that you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions that you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	End of year stock take of changes achieved
Introduce yourself to the neighbours on each side of your house and opposite			
Look for opportunities to get to know others in your street			
Walk to the shops, bus stop, local park etc at least once per week			
Smile / greet people you pass on your walk			
Ask for help from a neighbour – to set up a compost bin or water wise watering system, borrow a ladder, watch the house when you go away, help move something heavy			
Offer to help a neighbour – share garden produce (extra fruit or herbs), bring in their bins or mail if they're away, etc			
Check out the local paper for local events of interest			
Attend a local event at least once every 6 months eg a Sustainable Communities SA public meeting, local play, sporting event etc			

ENERGY

Step 1: Become familiar with your current energy consumption

Check your electricity bills for the last 12 months. On average, how many kilowatt hours do your household use each month? _____

Carry out a *Home Energy Self Audit*, downloaded from www.dtei.sa.gov.au/energy/energy_action/household/saving_energy/home_energy_audit
OR: borrow a Home Energy Toolkit from your local library.

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below that you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions that you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved
List at least 3 things to reduce energy use at home			
Buy green power			
List at least 3 appliances which could be replaced with a manual- or lower-energy use alternative			
List at least 3 things to reduce energy use at work/school/uni			
Develop a plan to cope with power outages : Cooking Lighting Food storage			

FOOD

Step 1: Become familiar with your household's current food consumption habits

- Consider how many times a week your household eats meat and dairy products
- Check where your fruit and vegetables are sourced from

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved
Write down the nearest location where you can obtain in-season, local fruit and vegetables			
Buy / grow locally in-season fruit & vegetables			
Use the <i>Ethical Supermarket Shopping</i> guide (avail. from Sustainable Communities SA) when writing your shopping list			
Become familiar with which fish stocks are sustainable (Australia's <i>Sustainable Seafood Guide</i> from Marine Conservation Society www.marineconservation.org.au)			
Write down the nearest location which sells fish from sustainable stocks			
Ensure meat & dairy are free range, organic, cruelty-free			
Write down the nearest location where food is sold in bulk and you can use refillable containers			
Buy items with minimal & recyclable packaging or buy in bulk and take your own reusable containers			

TRANSPORT

Step 1: Become familiar with your car specifications and fuel consumption

Calculate how many kilometres you travel in the car in an average week _____

Calculate how many litres of petrol your car uses per 100 kilometres _____

- To find out how many litres your car was designed to use per 100 kilometres, check your car specifications handbook OR
- Alternatively see www.greenvehicleguide.gov.au

To find out the safest walking, cycling & public transport routes, see

- www.transport.sa.gov.au/personal_transport/bike_direct/maps.asp or www.transport.sa.gov.au/environment/travelsmartsa/access_guides.asp and
- for bus routes and timetables go to www.adelaidemetro.com.au

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved
Walk or cycle when traveling 2km or less (1km = 10mins walk) & cycle when traveling 5km or less (1km=5 mins cycle)			
Use public transport whenever feasible			
Become familiar with public transport timetables to get to work/ uni/ school www.adelaidemetro.com.au			
Substitute flying with alternatives such as the bus or train			
Combine car & bicycle or public transport by using park & ride & bike lockers at bus interchanges and rail stations			
Walk to the local shops with a shopping trolley, bag or backpack			
Drive smoothly, check tyres, remove weight and roof racks, minimize air conditioning use			
Make a plan for getting to work / shopping / school to cope with interruptions to oil supplies Train/Tram/Bus stop location Train/Tram/Bus route # Bicycle roadworthiness			

WASTE

Step 1: Become familiar with how much waste your household currently generates and how it currently disposes of the different types - including household hazardous waste; fluoros, batteries and e-waste; kitchen food scraps; recyclables – plastic, paper, glass, metals; garden / green waste

- Visit the Zero Waste website: www.zerowaste.sa.gov.au

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved
Identify an item which you will go without, hire, share, borrow or buy less of			
Set up a compost bin, worm farm or bokashi bucket			
Collect soft plastic and place in collection bins at supermarkets			
Buy goods which are unpackaged or in reduced, recyclable or recycled packaging			
Re-use jars, cans, wrapping paper, cartons			
Place household acceptable recyclable items in the yellow-topped bin			
Take your own bottle of water with you			
Recycle fluoro globes through De-lights outlets			
Recycle e-waste at e-cycle recovery, 389 Glen Osmond Rd, Glen Osmond			
Take household batteries to Battery World outlets			

WATER

Step 1: Become familiar with your current water consumption

Check your last water bill. What is your household's average daily water use in litres? ____

- To find out where your water is used most, try the water calculator at www.sawater.com.au or for tips on how to save water, see www.water.sa.gov.au
- Don't forget water rebates are available too, see www.sawater.com.au home rebate scheme

Step 2: Identify the actions from the list below you have already taken

Step 3: Identify the actions you intend to take this year

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved
Identify at least 3 things to reduce water use at home &/or in the garden			
Conduct a review of efficiency of water-using devices at home eg. Showerhead, taps, toilet cistern leaks			
Re-use grey water on the garden			
Install a rainwater tank			
Develop a plan to cope with interruptions to mains water supply Bathing / washing Toilet Garden Drinking / cooking			

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMICS

Taking actions in each of the above areas is critical. However, to achieve the environmental outcomes needed, even more drastic shifts may be required around what we value and how we consume. Sustainable economics asks us to consider how, by spending less money and consuming sustainably, we can make room for the creation of meaningful and rewarding activities and relationships.

Step 1: Think about your current priorities

Step 2: How could you reduce your consumption or change your way of spending

Step 3: Identify the actions from the list below you have already taken

Step 4: Identify the actions you intend to take this year to reduce your spending

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	End of year stock-take of changes achieved
Identify at least 3 activities you would spend time on if you had more			
Identify at least 3 people you would like to spend more time with			
Identify at least 3 things you would be willing to borrow or share with others rather than buying your own			
Identify at least 2 areas of expertise you could share with others			
Buy services rather than actual products			
Join a credit union rather than a bank			
Buy high-quality, more durable products that can be repaired rather than replaced			
Buy Australian and local products			
Develop a plan to cope with less income: Sharing housing Sharing transport Sharing expertise (LETS) Sharing gardens			

Goals and guidelines

We have suggested just a few of the actions that can be taken to reduce your ecological footprint. Feel free to consider these suggestions and add your own as well.

	Actions I have already taken	Actions I intend to take this year	Stocktake of changes achieved

More information

Further information and tips around each of the areas listed in this booklet can be found in the Resources section of the Sustainable Communities website:

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