

our environment

it's a living thing

Eco-friendly Communities

Promoting Sustainable Living and Working



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TRUST

Department of Environment and Conservation NSW



LCSA
Local Community Services Association

Eco-friendly Communities

Promoting Sustainable
Living and Working



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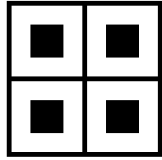
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Eco-friendly Communities

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Our environment – it's a living thing is the leading NSW environmental education program for sustainability. Designed to inform and engage people on the importance of living sustainably at home, work and play, the program has had great success since 2001 in increasing the NSW community awareness of, commitment to, and action for sustainable living.

For more information visit www.livingthing.net.au

Introduction

The *Eco-friendly Communities – Promoting Sustainable Living and Working Kit* is a package of resources and suggestions for a structured but very flexible program to increase community understanding about living sustainably. The kit has been developed for use by Neighbourhood Centres but will have uses in other settings.

The kit is divided into five sections. The first three sections provide some simple steps you can take to achieve an eco-friendly centre, people or community. You can choose the one that suits your Centre and its membership, your region and/or your community:

1. How to be an ECO-FRIENDLY CENTRE – By taking some simple actions such as using energy efficient light globes, dual flush toilets or composting systems, you can make your Centre more environmentally sustainable. You will get a poster to put in your foyer telling your community that your Centre is eco-friendly.
2. How to encourage ECO-FRIENDLY PEOPLE – Groups using your Centre can explore how they can have an environmentally sustainable life at home, work or play. This aims to help you and group participants to consider what you are already doing that is eco-friendly and what you could do to be environmentally sustainable. It also encourages you to make a commitment to taking some small steps towards being eco-friendly. These steps might be small and seem insignificant but they will add up to major improvements. Often, small steps will highlight the possibility of more small steps.
3. How to be part of an ECO-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY – How your Centre can get involved in environmental projects in your community, with other groups, schools, councils or environmental groups.

Section 4 includes an evaluation form, environmental contacts and a list of grants available for environmental projects. Section 5 brings together useful resources and information on a range of environmental issues.

About this project

The kit was developed as part of a project encouraging women to live and work sustainably. The project is a joint initiative between the Local Community Services Association (LCSA) and Department of Environment and Conservation NSW.

The project aims to increase the knowledge of people and communities involved with Neighbourhood Centres so that they can work together to identify ways of living and working sustainably. The project will help people to have a better understanding of:

- ▣ ways of living and working sustainably
- ▣ environmental issues such as waste, water, energy, chemicals, biodiversity and air pollution and what can be done about them
- how to get involved in community environmental projects.

Everyone involved in the project will be encouraged to make an ongoing commitment to take action, individually and within their community, to encourage sustainable ways of living.

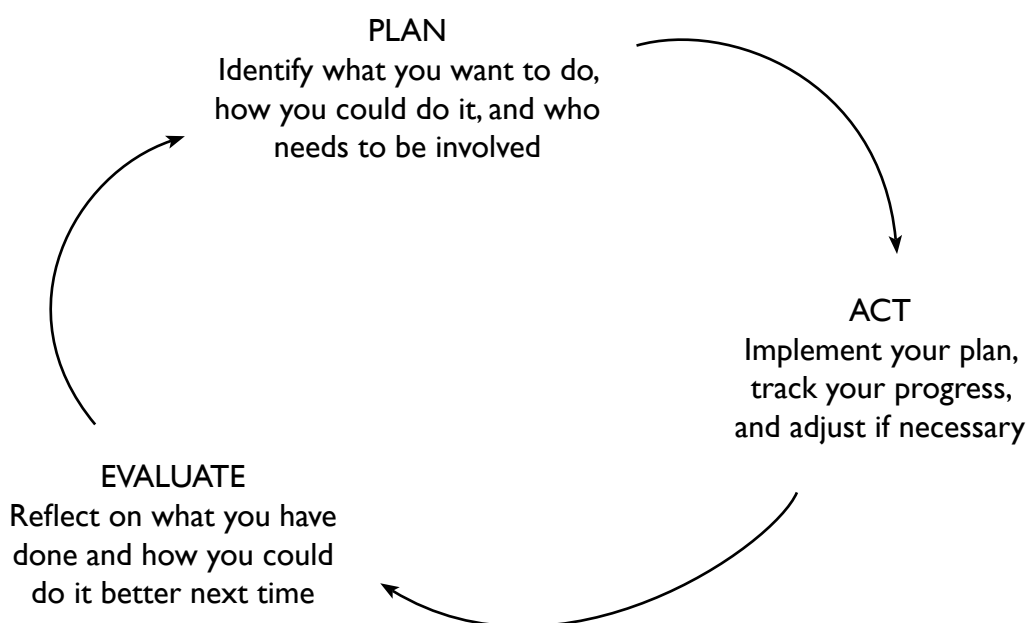
Project principles

This project is based on three basic principles – action learning, forming partnerships and promoting sustainable living.

Action Learning

Action learning is something that everyone who works in a Neighbourhood Centre does all the time. It's how we think about what works and what doesn't and change them as we go along to get a better result.

Action learning is grounded in a participatory and flexible model of education, which encourages responsiveness to local knowledge and skills, the needs of the community and the participants, as shown in the diagram below.



Forming partnerships

Partnerships are beneficial to all partners. They evolve in different ways and can lead to long-term strategies. Collaborations work best when the partners focus on their respective strengths and work together to explore a range of other opportunities that benefit both. There are many potential partners for this project, for example local government, local landcare groups or environmental groups. More information about partnerships is provided in the booklet, *It Takes Two*, which is available from the LCSA (Phone: 02 9211 3644).

Promoting Sustainable Living

Sustainable living can mean different things to different people. For some people it means having clean drinking water, while for others it could be learning to read or having safe shelter for the night. For others it is about protecting the planet that supports us. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) define sustainable living as follows:

... Living sustainably depends on a duty to seek harmony with other people and with nature. The guiding rules are that people must share with each other and care for the Earth. Humanity must take no more from nature than nature can replenish...¹

There is no set recipe for how we can live sustainably. Each person and community needs to search for their own solutions that are appropriate and relevant to their situation. There are however, some principles which can guide our actions and decisions.

Ideally, sustainable living means that people are able to balance three key issues in their lives – the environmental, the social (including economic) and the personal. We all know that sometimes there are trade-offs between these things – some issues seem to be valued more than others, but it is important that we work together to restore the balance. Some principles which can guide our actions are:

- conserve the Earth's vitality and diversity
- keep within the Earth's carrying capacity
- encourage equity between different generations. This includes *inter-generation*, (that is between you, your parents and your grandparents), and *intra-generational*, (that is between your community and other communities).
- enable communities to care for their own environments
- consider both the local and global dimensions of our actions.

(adapted from IUCN 1991)

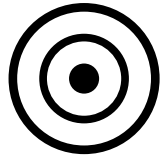
When considering sustainable living it is important to think about our own personal lives. The actions of individual people contribute to or cause many environmental problems. In many cases we can act as individuals to make a difference. Every positive action, no matter how small it may seem, is important.

It is equally important to think about the communities where we live. Creating sustainable communities is a process where, through learning, action and reflection, people can use their everyday experiences to address social and environmental problems and create a shared vision for the future.

For things you can do to help you and your community live sustainably, see the *Living Sustainably* poster in Section 5 of this kit.

¹ IUCN, UNEP, WWF (1991) *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, IUCN, UNEP, WWF, Gland, Switzerland.

Section I



How to be an eco-friendly Centre

This section is designed to help you identify what you are already doing at your Neighbourhood Centre that is eco-friendly, and what you can do to be more eco-friendly. It will provide you with advice on how to improve the environmental performance of your centre and save money.

Based on an action research model, there are five simple steps to assist you to develop an Environmental Management Plan (EMP), and promote yourself as an eco-friendly centre.

This section also brings together useful resources and indicates where to get more information and provides some practical advice.

Take time to consider some of your everyday activities and their environmental impact.

Activity

Close your eyes and think about a normal work day. You get out of bed in the morning, go to the loo and flush the toilet. Is it dual flush? Next you shower. Have you got an energy efficient shower head? These shower heads save both water and energy. You have breakfast. Do you compost and recycle? Off to work. How do you get there? Could you walk, cycle, use public transport? You arrive at work. Are the lights on from yesterday? Photocopier? Computer? Has someone hosed down out the front? Where does the dirty water go? Are sprinklers on to water the garden? Are the plants native to the area? Have they been mulched? Has the garbage been put out? Is it recycled? Composted? Have your first coffee of the day. Is it a disposable cup? Has the hot water been on all night? Half an hour later you go to the loo. Is it dual flush?

*The future is not a place we are going to, but a place we are creating.
The paths to it are not found but made.
The making of these paths changes both the maker and the destination.*

(Motto of the Australian Commission for the Future)

Steps to becoming an Eco-friendly Centre

Becoming an eco-friendly Centre takes and shows your commitment to the environment. Follow these simple steps.

STEP 1: Develop a policy statement affirming your commitment to become an eco-friendly centre. Consider the draft one included and make it relevant for your Centre. You will need to nominate a staff member to be responsible for this in your Centre.

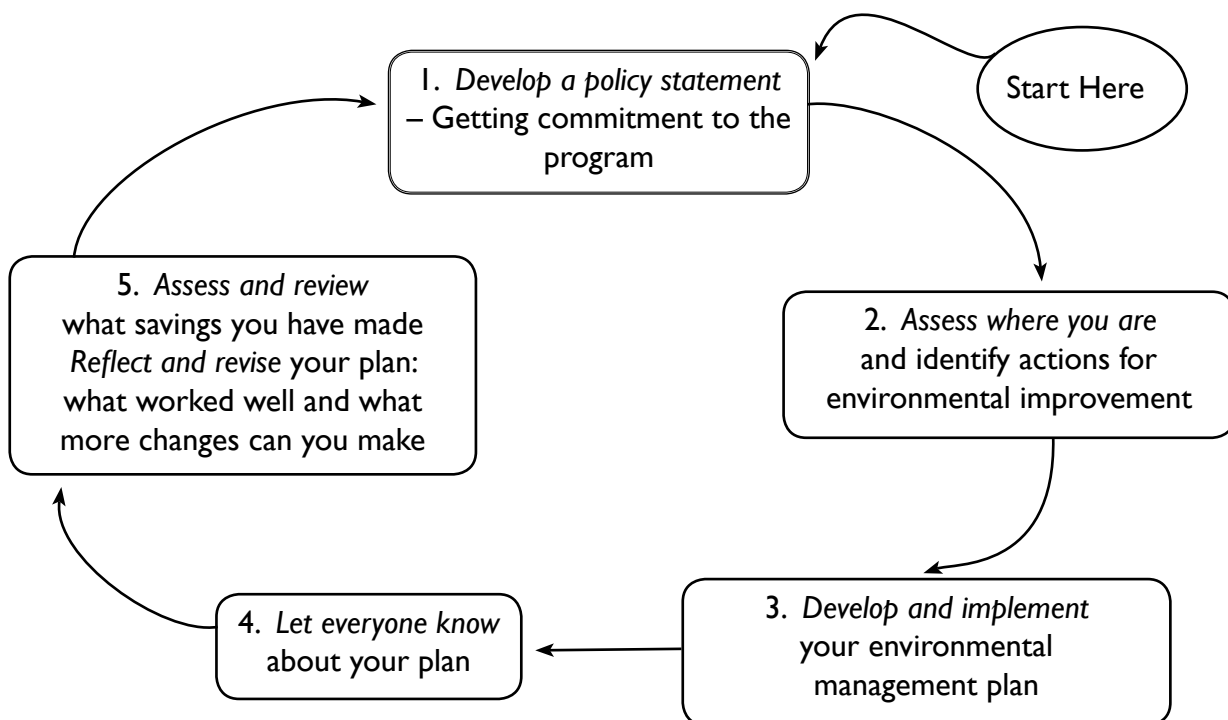
STEP 2: Complete the assessment/review of your centre's environmental impact on waste, energy, water, chemicals and other issues such as biodiversity and air quality.

STEP 3: Using the actions agreed to in Step 2, develop an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) based on your three commitments. Against each commitment identify dates for action and who will be involved. Also include review dates and comments on savings. A template for an environmental management plan is included here. There are also some suggestions about how you could integrate biodiversity and air quality issues into your EMP.

STEP 4: Let everyone know about your plan, and why you are doing it, including the management committee, participants, local council and the community. Use the local media and look for sponsorship. To assist you to promote your activities in the Centre, the LCSA can provide you with a poster explaining your commitment to being an eco-friendly centre for prominent display in your centre. Send a copy of your environmental management plan to LCSA and we will send you a poster.

STEP 5: Assess and review what worked and what savings you have made. Reflect on the plan and the process, what worked well and why and what changes could be made in the future. Revise your EMP.

These steps are based on action research cycle and can be considered as:



STEP I

Develop a policy statement. Consider this draft and make it relevant to your Centre. You will need to nominate a staff member to be responsible for this in your Centre.

Policy for an eco-friendly Centre

Statement of intent

We consider that it is important for all employees, volunteers and users of this centre to understand the importance of caring for the environment and minimise their impact on it in order to secure a better quality of life for present and future generations.

This centre has a commitment to helping employees and centre participants to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to form judgements about sustainable lifestyles and to participate in environmental decision making.

We will do this by developing an Environmental Management Plan (EMP). The EMP will deliver environmental improvements as well as cost savings to the Centre. It will identify ways in which the Centre will:

1. Reduce waste from office equipment and supplies
2. Save energy (electricity or gas)
3. Save and protect water
4. Reduce chemical use.

This Policy will come into effect from _____ and will be reviewed subject to discussion and agreement of the undersigned or their representatives.

Signed _____
(Management Committee Chairperson)

Signed _____
(Executive Officer)

Signed _____
(Worker Representative)

Signed _____
(Volunteer Representative)

STEP 2

Assess where you are and identify actions for improvement. Complete these reviews of your Centre's environmental impact on waste, energy, water and chemicals.

Your Centre's environmental impact – waste

How much waste do you create → What are you already doing → What else can you do → Make a commitment: *go on*

Where are you now?

To work out how you can make changes in your centre we need to estimate where you are now.

Waste

Estimate the number of bins per week _____

Recycling

Estimate the number of bins per week _____

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and share your ideas and reasons with others. The list is not intended to be exhaustive – use your own experience and knowledge to add to it.

What you do now	Yes	No	What stops you
Recycle paper, cardboard and glass			
Use both sides of office paper where possible			
Make message pads from used paper			
Use email and electronic files to reduce paper copies			
Use overhead projectors and white boards in meetings to reduce the need for handouts			
Use a toner recharge service			
Compost food waste and garden prunings			
Sell or give away any excess equipment or furniture			

Borrow equipment we only need to use occasionally			
Help centre participants to organise toy swaps and share kids clothes			
Have a notice on the letterbox refusing junk mail			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

What else can you do?

Reducing waste can be done by thinking about three easy steps:

- ❑ Avoid – if we use less now there will be less waste later
- ❑ Reuse – it makes more sense to reuse an existing product, to have it repaired or modified than it does to spend time and energy recycling it
- ❑ Recycle – the materials in these products can be broken down and used to make something new.

Make a commitment

Plan to review your environmental impact in six months and see what changes and/or savings you have made.

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down *three things* you can do at your centre. This might include:

- ❑ Second hand day – have a spring clean at the centre to get rid of unused items and make some more space. Invite centre participants to bring in any items they don't want and have a centre garage sale or just a give away.
- ❑ Look after office equipment. Have machines regularly maintained and stick to maintenance schedules.
- ❑ Ensure staff are properly trained and know how to use paper-saving functions of office equipment such as double sided printing and photocopying.
- ❑ Use the resources provided to produce a press release for the local media to highlight the commitment you are making. This might encourage other groups to follow your lead. Follow this up with a further press release in three months to announce your reduced environmental impact.
- ❑ Buy recycled products such as recycled paper and plastic whenever possible – these kits are printed on recycled paper and the folder are made from recycled plastic.
- ❑ Talk to your waste officer at council. They can provide information and advice. You might get a compost bin or worm farm from council. Or the offer of an Earthworks course. Also ask your local government environment section to provide information or advice.
- ❑ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures and posters in Section 5 will help if you need more information about waste.

- ▣ Reducing paper waste at work
- ▣ Reducing waste from office equipment and supplies
- ▣ Making your old household items and garden waste live again
- ▣ Litter: It's in your hands
- ▣ Easy guide to recycling
- ▣ Easy guide to composting
- ▣ Easy guide to worm farming

Or you might also like to check out:

- ▣ Resource NSW recycling directory at www.environment.nsw.gov.au
- ▣ The NSW Government's *Our Environment: It's a Living Thing* website at **www.livingthing.net.au**

Your Centre's environmental impact – energy

How much energy do you use → What are you already doing → What else can you do → Make a commitment: *go on*

Where are you now?

To work out how you can make changes in your centre we need to estimate where you are now:

Electricity

Average daily usage from your current bill _____

Gas

Average daily usage from your current bill _____

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others. The list is not intended to be exhaustive – use your own experience and knowledge to add to it.

What you do now	Yes	No	What stops us
We regularly turn off the lights when they're not in use			
We use energy efficient (compact fluorescent) light bulbs			
Our centre is insulated			
We use 'green power'			
We have a solar hot water system			
We have installed draft excluders and door seals			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

What else can you do?

- Make your centre more energy efficient:
- Insulate walls, ceilings and floors to control heat loss or gain.
- Choose curtains that insulate windows.
- Drafts – seal gaps around external doors and windows to stop drafts – this can be as simple as using a draft sausage.

- ☐ Plant young trees in positions where they won't block winter sun from the centre's northern aspects when they grow.
- ☐ Choose energy efficient appliances such as off-peak hot water systems, radiant, halogen and induction cook tops, and in-slab floor heating. Major new household appliances have an energy efficiency rating. The more stars, the greater the efficiency.
- ☐ Use a ceiling fan to help distribute heat.

Make a commitment

Plan to review your environmental impact in six months and see what changes and/or savings you have made.

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do in your centre. This might include:

- ☐ Replace blown conventional globes with compact fluorescent globes.
- ☐ Turn off appliances like your computer instead of leaving them on stand-by when not in use.
- ☐ Use the resources provided to produce a press release for the local media to highlight the commitment you are making. This might encourage other groups to follow your lead. Follow this up with a further press release in three months to announce your reduced environmental impact.
- ☐ Ask the local energy provider for advice about energy conservation and ask them how they could help to make your centre more efficient.
- ☐ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures in Section 5 will help if you need more information about energy:

- ☐ How to Live Energy Smart
- ☐ Turn on your Green Power
- ☐ Global Warming Cool it!

Or you might also like to check out these websites:

- ☐ Tips on living and working energy smart **www.energysmart.com.au**
- ☐ Organisations who can provide energy efficient products and services **www.energysmartallies.com**
- ☐ Green Power **www.greenpower.com.au**
- ☐ Reducing greenhouse gases **www.greenhouse.gov.au**

For other contacts on energy conservation and greenhouse gases see the contacts list in Section 4.

Your Centre's environmental impact – water

How much water do you use → What are you already doing → What else can you do → Make a commitment: *go on*

Where are you now?

To work out how you can make changes in your centre we need to estimate where you are now:

Water

Average daily usage from your current bill _____

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others. The list is not intended to be exhaustive – use your own experience and knowledge to add to it.

What you do now	Yes	No	What stops you
Fix leaking taps promptly			
Have dual flush toilets			
Have minimal areas of lawn in the garden			
Install reduced-flow shower heads			
Put up reminders for people to make sure taps are turned off properly			
Keep a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator to stop the need to run the cold tap until the water is cool enough			
Do not use the hose to wash down paths and driveways			
Gutters are kept clean to avoid stormwater pollution			
Have a rainwater tank installed			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

What else can you do?

Reducing water use is often just a case of reminding people that water is precious. After all we shouldn't forget that we live in the driest inhabited continent on Earth.

- ▣ Put up reminder signs around the centre
- ▣ Put up some facts about water use in Australia
- ▣ Think about stormwater as well and provide bins or containers for cigarette butts outside the centre

Make a commitment

Plan to review your environmental impact in six months and see what changes and/or savings you have made.

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do at your centre. This might include:

- ▣ Get a tank installed to capture the stormwater for watering the garden. Ask the tank making industry in your area. They can advertise their product and demonstrate its usefulness.
- ▣ Contact a local tree lopper/mulch supplier and see if you can do a deal for free or cheap mulch in return for recognition of their support.
- ▣ Use the resources provided to produce a press release for the local media to highlight the commitment you are making. This might encourage other groups to follow your lead. Follow this up with a further press release in three months to announce your reduced environmental impact.
- ▣ Contact your local water authority. It could be Sydney Water or Hunter Water. If not it may be based in local government. They may be able to help you install water saving devices to promote water conservation to the community. Ask your local government environment section to provide information or advice.
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures and posters in Section 5 will help if you need more information about water use:

- ▣ Save water, money and the environment
- ▣ Water wise garden book
- ▣ Stormwater pollution: the difference is you
- ▣ Every drop counts: saving water starts in your own backyard
- ▣ Easy mulching guide

Or you might also like to check out information from:

- ▣ Sydney Water on water conservation and recycling at **www.sydneywater.com.au/everydropcounts/index.cfm** (for those who live in the Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra regions).
- ▣ Hunter Water on water conservation and recycling **www.hunterwater.com.au/**
- ▣ NSW Government Stormwater website **www.environment.nsw.gov.au/stormwater**

Your Centre's environmental impact – chemicals

What chemicals are you using in the centre → What are you already doing to minimise the use of chemicals → What else can you do → Make a commitment: *go on*

Where are you now?

To work out how you can make changes in your centre we need to find out where you are now:

Find out what chemicals are used in your centre and estimate how much you spend each year on:

- Cleaning products – include those used by staff, volunteers and cleaners
 Estimated annual cost _____
- Chemicals used in the grounds – especially pesticides and herbicides
 Estimated annual cost _____
- Chemicals used in the centre, its ceiling space or underneath to control pests such as cockroaches, ants and mice.
 Estimated annual cost _____

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others. The list is not intended to be exhaustive – use your own experience and knowledge to add to it.

What you do now	Yes	No	What stops you
Use as many non-chemical cleaning products as we can, like vinegar and oxygen bleach.			
Have insect screens on doors and windows			
Don't supply 'air-fresheners' in toilets			
Make sure all surfaces in the kitchen are left clean to reduce ants and cockroaches			
Buy snail pellets marked pet and native animal safe			
Use compost on the garden rather than chemical fertilisers			
Use old carpet underlay to kill weeds in the garden			
Use sticky traps for cockroaches			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

What else can you do?

Make your centre less chemical dependent:

- Buy or borrow a green guide book and work out which chemical products you can replace with environmentally safe cleaning products
- Ask parents who have family members with asthma what products they use for cleaning
- Ensure that chemicals kept at the centre (detergents, cleaning products, garden chemicals) are securely stored and dispose of those you no longer need. Ask your local council where these products can be disposed of safely.
- Find out about cleaning products based on micro fibre fabrics which clean without chemicals – some of these are now available in hardware shops and supermarkets.

Make a commitment

Plan to review your environmental impact in six months and see what changes and/or savings you have made.

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do at your centre. This might include:

- Start a compost bin to use in the centre's garden instead of chemical fertilisers.
- Audit and list the cleaning products you use and replace them with environmentally friendly ones.
- Find out about, and use low toxicity baits for ants and cockroaches – 5% borax mixed with sugar is one type.
- Find out about how you can dispose of unwanted household chemicals safely in your area and make sure all users of your centre know about this.
- What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures and posters in Section 5 will help if you need more information about chemicals:

- Easy guide to natural cleaning
- Return your unwanted medicines to your pharmacy

You may also want to check out information on chemicals in your environment on the Total Environment Centre's website: www.tec.nccnsw.org.au/member/tec/projects/tcye/

Your Centre's environmental impact – other issues

There are other environmental issues that you may want to include in your Environmental Management Plan. Some examples are provided below for maintaining biodiversity and improving air quality. Taking steps to do these things may be a bit more difficult but some suggestions are included here:

- ▣ Check out the centre's garden with someone who knows about local native plants and bush regeneration. Ask them to identify any plants which invade bushland and get advice on how to remove them.
- ▣ Get a list of local native plants from your local nursery and use these plants in your garden
- ▣ Find out about local groups doing bush regeneration, landcare and coastcare and advertise their events in your centre and newsletters.
- ▣ Encourage people to car pool
- ▣ If your centre is in an area where wood heaters are used, make information about efficient use of wood heaters available.
- ▣ What other things could you do?

STEP 3

Develop and implement your environmental management plan based on your three commitments. Against each commitment you should identify dates for action and who will be involved as well as review dates and comments on savings.

Environmental Management Plan

Waste

Commitment	Date for action	Who is involved	Review dates	Comments on savings

Energy

Commitment	Date for action	Who is involved	Review dates	Comments on savings

Water

Commitment	Date for action	Who is involved	Review dates	Comments on savings

Chemicals

Commitment	Date for action	Who is involved	Review dates	Comments on savings

Other environmental issues

Commitment	Date for action	Who is involved	Review dates	Comments on savings

Signed

/ /

STEP 4

Let everyone know about your plan and why you are doing it, including the management committee, participants, local council and the community. Use the local media and look for sponsorship

Promoting your eco-friendly Centre

Gaining the commitment of your Centre staff, management committee and participants is crucial to the success of your plan. Letting people know about your Environmental Management Plan is an important part of changing behaviour in your community and developing collaboration between local government, community groups and individuals.

On the next page there is a draft sponsorship letter which you could use to send to local businesses or industry or you can adapt it to use as a media release.

LCSA has information on how to use the local media to get your message across – email **info@lcsa.org.au**.

To assist you to promote your activities in your Centre, LCSA can provide you with a poster explaining your commitment to being an eco-friendly centre for prominent display in your centre. To obtain a poster, send a copy of your Environmental Management Plan to:

LCSA Eco-friendly Communities – Promoting Sustainable Living and Working Project
6/66 Albion St
Surry Hills
NSW 2010
or email it to: info@lcsa.org.au

We will send you a coloured poster to display in your centre.

Draft sponsorship letter

Dear <insert name of managing director>

Re: Sponsorship of <insert name of your center> local Eco-friendly Centre

The Eco-friendly Communities project is a Local Community Services Association program, developed in conjunction with the NSW Government to increase community understanding about living sustainably. The project is designed to encourage sustainability at a household and community level. It focuses on five areas that have an environmental impact and explores avenues for establishing Eco-friendly Centres, Eco-friendly People and Eco-friendly Projects in our community.

There are Neighbourhood Centres operating throughout the state and they all rely on a committed volunteer workforce to staff the centre and implement education and community outreach programs such as (list)

I am writing to invite (insert company name) to invest in this community action project to help deliver a sustainable future.

As a valuable member of our local business community we are offering you the opportunity to support this vital community action project.

By assisting us with sponsorship funding you can achieve the following benefits:

- Demonstrate your company's commitment to environmental protection
- Help raise the profile of your organisation within your local community
- Convey your corporate responsibility actions to your clients customers and employees
- Explore new opportunities to work with your local community and the NSW Government.

(We are seeking corporate sponsorship valued at either \$5,000, \$2,000 or \$1,000.)

<Insert Company name>'s support of the Eco-friendly Communities project will be rewarded in a number of ways. With your help we can purchase new water and energy saving devices, and other eco-friendly materials, and share our experiences of positive environmental action. Our goal is to promote our project, and your involvement to the community. We will also focus on gaining media recognition for this collaborative effort. I would also like to investigate other ways of integrating your involvement in the centre and its members.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any specific questions about this project, and I will contact you in the coming week to discuss this exciting opportunity with you in detail.

STEP 5

Assess and review what saving you have made. Reflect and revise your plan

At the end of six months return to your Environmental Management Plan and assess what you have achieved and what savings you have made. Reflect on the process; what worked and what didn't work and how could it be done better. Revise your EMP by identifying future changes that could be made for environment improvement. Let everyone know about your successes and what you intend doing in the future. Let the LCSA know by completing the attached questionnaire. Attach a copy of your revised EMP.

Questionnaire: Becoming an eco-friendly Centre

In this section of the kit we have tried to give ideas and information to help neighbourhood and other community centres to make changes to be more eco-friendly. Has it worked?

Are you more aware of issues to do with:

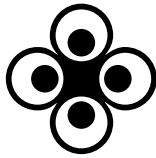
Reducing waste in our Neighbourhood Centre? Yes No
We have reduced waste by _____

Reducing energy use in our Neighbourhood Centre? Yes No
We have reduced energy use by _____

Reducing water use in our Neighbourhood Centre? Yes No
We have reduced water use by _____

Tell us how you have used the information in this section to make your neighbourhood center more eco-friendly.

Section 2



How to encourage eco-friendly people

This section of the kit contains six Action Guides written to assist people in your Centre to hold discussion groups on living sustainably. They are based on adult education principles and use group discussion to share ideas and experiences.

They will help to develop an understanding of environmental issues and a range of ways to become more eco-friendly.

We know that people in Australia are quite well informed about the environment. Nearly all of us know what we should do but we often find that it is more difficult than we thought. For every action we would like to take it often seems there are a whole lot of reasons, problems and minor issues that get in our way. It's just not as easy as having the right information – we have to also find ways of getting around the things that make it more difficult than what we have always done.

When we moved to Sydney we had a tiny backyard and no room for a compost bin. So when I saw one of those black plastic worm farms at a garage sale I thought “That should make it easy, we can have a worm farm on the front porch and not have to put all our veggie scraps into the bin”. BUT the veggie scraps got flyblown. It was revolting so we buried the lot and it's going to take some convincing to get me to use it again!

Worm farming as a means of disposing of the veggie scraps is a sound thing to do. But as we see here, not without its potential problems. A solution to the problem facing this struggling *Eco-friendly person* would be to seek some advice from someone with experience in worm farming. Lots of councils or adult education centres run very short courses on worm farming.

When our fridge died and we needed to buy a new one we found the energy efficient models were more expensive. But using the Energy Saving Ready Reckoner we worked out that we would recoup the extra cost and then be saving money through lower energy bills in just over a year. So we went ahead and bought the more expensive fridge.

Getting started

The action guides offer an approach that is action oriented and uses and values people's own knowledge, experience and creativity. They also provide references for more information.

We suggest that you only use one action guide at each meeting. They can be used in any order according to the interest of the group. Everyone should have a chance to read the guide before your discussion. Maybe make a few copies and share them around. You can help people who don't read well by talking about the information with them before the group discussion begins. The length of your discussion is up to you. Most groups will meet for between 30 minutes and one hour.

Using the action guides

The action guides help you to look at some changes you might be able to make and how you can share ideas about how other people have successfully changed their behaviour. Each action guide contains:

- ▣ How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends
- ▣ Introduction to the issue – a small amount of factual information about the issue and it's consequences
- ▣ What are you doing already – sharing your ideas with others
- ▣ What else can you do – some simple ideas which can be used as models
- ▣ Make a commitment – ideas to use as an individual or as a group
- ▣ More information – web pages, state and local government, community groups, industry associations.
- ▣ Thinking about after your meeting – most of us think up our best ideas a few days after a meeting or discussion, make time to capture these ideas.

Action guide: Taking steps to reduce waste



How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

This action guide will work best if you have a nominated facilitator: either choose a facilitator beforehand or ask the group if anyone can fulfill this role. A good facilitator should be open-minded, friendly, a good listener, and sensitive to the needs and interests of group members.

Some useful tips:

- ☐ Try to encourage quiet people to speak. Those who tend to speak a lot in groups should not forget the benefits of listening!
- ☐ Disagreement is to be expected. Acknowledge it and move on.
- ☐ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ☐ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Waste – why it matters

“When asked what waste is, most people say things like ‘useless or worthless garbage’, or ‘stuff to be thrown away’. But a lot of what we put into our rubbish bins is not useless at all. It’s just that we use things once and then throw them away.” Earth Works

While not all areas across NSW have curbside recycling this isn’t the only way we can recycle what we no longer need. Australians are good at reusing things and this is just another way of recycling. We have a long tradition of sharing children’s clothes when they have grown out of them or organising market stalls and garage sales to recycle our household goods. We are also good at turning household waste into compost and worm castings.

But we also know that in recent years more and more useful material has been thrown away. We often don’t make the time to recycle our waste. And we are running out of places to dispose of all the waste.

Questions

1. Where does your rubbish go? Some will be disposed of to landfill or the tip, and some will be recycled – but where exactly does it go? What is the expected life of the landfill or tip, and what will happen when it is full?
2. Do you have a keen gardener in your family who makes compost and collects manure from farms?
3. Do you buy things which are well built and can be repaired?
4. Do you buy things that are over packaged? What can you do with the packaging?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I compost garden prunings			
I compost food waste			
I recycle paper, cardboard and glass			
I take cloth bags or a basket when I go shopping			
I reuse plastic containers and other packaging			
I buy things at garage sales, op shops and second-hand places			

I share kids clothes with friends and relatives when the kids have grown out of them			
I have a notice on the mailbox refusing junk mail			
I avoid over-packaged products or I leave the packaging at the shop			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

Is it all rubbish?

Every Australian creates nearly half a tonne of household waste each year. Household waste makes up almost half of the solid waste created in this country each year.

What do you put in your bin?

Household waste is made up of:

- ▣ 11% other
- ▣ 3% metal
- ▣ 6% plastic
- ▣ 5% glass
- ▣ 19% paper and cardboard
- ▣ 56% food scraps and garden waste



What else can you do?

Reducing waste can be done by thinking about three easy steps:

- ▣ Avoid – if we use less now there will be less waste later. Avoid buying products with too much packaging and look for recycling symbols.
- ▣ Reuse – it makes more sense to reuse an existing product, to have it repaired or modified than it does to spend time and energy recycling it.
- ▣ Recycle – the materials in these products can be broken down and used to make something new.

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do either as a group or in your own home. This might include:

- ▣ Second hand day – get people in your street to put items they don't want on their front lawn in the week before council clean-up. This can be either as a group garage sale or just to give away.
- ▣ Organise a toy swap day at your Community Centre.
- ▣ Ask your local government environment section to run a class in composting or worm farming at a time that suits your group.
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures and posters in Section 5 will help if you need more information about reducing waste:

- ▣ Reducing paper waste at work
- ▣ Reducing waste from office equipment and supplies
- ▣ Making your old household items and garden waste live again
- ▣ Litter: It's in your hands
- ▣ Easy guide to recycling
- ▣ Easy guide to composting
- ▣ Easy guide to worm farming

Or you might also like to check out:

- ▣ Resource NSW recycling directory at **www.environment.nsw.gov.au**
- ▣ The NSW Government's *Our Environment: It's a Living Thing* website at **www.livingthing.net.au**
- ▣ Information on littering and littering laws **www.environment.nsw.gov.au/litter**
- ▣ Contact your local council and ask them about recycling services. Do they have curbside recycling or drop off areas? Can they give you information about composting or worm farms?

For other contacts on waste issues see the contacts list in Section 4.

Did you know?

Since 1990 Australians have been throwing away about 10 million tonnes of waste each year. More than 50% is made up of food scraps and garden waste that could be composted.

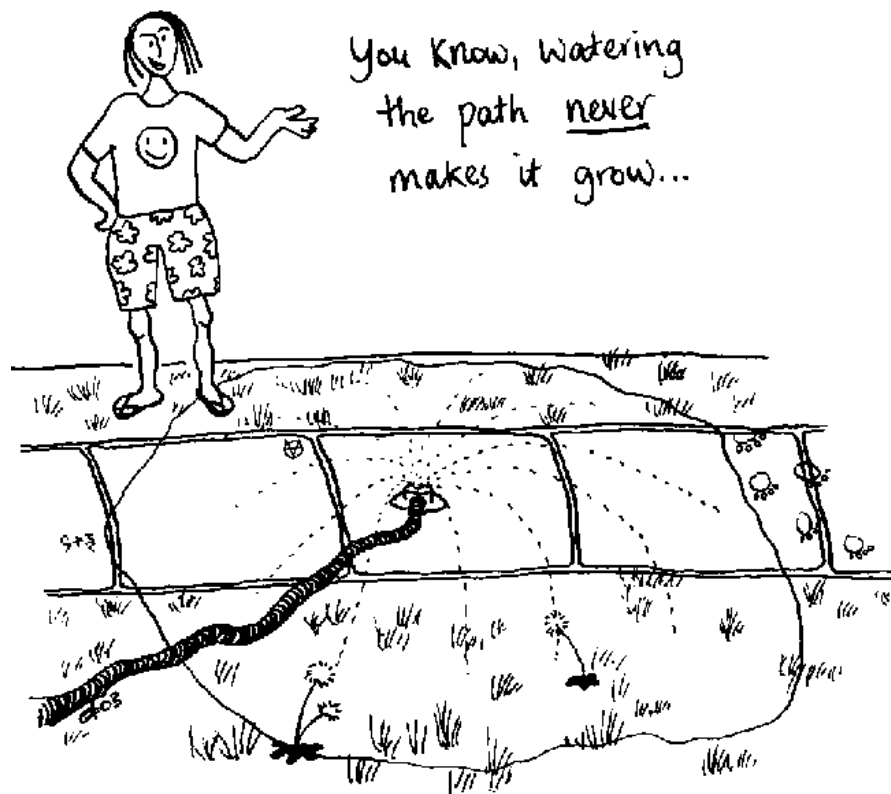
Australians use more than 6 billion plastic bags a year. If these were tied together they would stretch around the world 37 times.

Thinking about waste issues after your meeting

Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? You might like to ask someone from your local council to talk to the group to find out about recycling, composting or other waste services.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Action guide: Taking steps to reduce water use and avoid water pollution



How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

This action guide will work best if you have a nominated facilitator; either choose a facilitator beforehand or ask the group if anyone can fulfill this role. A good facilitator should be open-minded, friendly, a good listener, and sensitive to the needs and interests of group members.

Some useful tips:

- ☐ Try to encourage quiet people to speak. Those who tend to speak a lot in groups should not forget the benefits of listening!
- ☐ Disagreement is to be expected. Acknowledge it and move on.
- ☐ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ☐ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Water – every drop counts

Water is a limited resource. Less than one per cent of the earth's water is fresh and is available to humans. This amount of water will never increase. Towing icebergs up from Antarctica or turning rivers around so that their water runs inland and not out to sea are ideas that occasionally come up. But these ideas have been dismissed by governments and most scientists.

Australia is the driest, flattest, most poorly drained continent, with the most variable climate. Only 12 per cent of rainfall runs off into rivers. Our run-off in a mythical "average year" is around one-sixth of that of North America, Europe or Asia.

Andrew Campbell, "Drought and Denial", in *The Australian*, Nov 20 2002

A lot of water is wasted because so many people don't think about where it comes from and where it goes after they use it. The average daily usage per person per day in Australia is 498 litres.

Questions

1. Have you, or people you know, ever lived in a place where you had to rely on rainfall collected in tanks? How does this affect the way people use water? What do people do to save water?
2. Where does your drinking water come from? Is it a dam, a river, tanks or ground water?
3. Where does your waste water go to?
4. Where does your stormwater go to?
5. What are the major issues that are impacting on your local waterways (e.g. creek, beach, river)?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I use mulch in the garden			
I take short showers			
I fix leaking taps promptly			
I have planted a water-saving native garden			
I don't water a large area of lawn			
I water the garden in the evening			

I wash my car on the lawn using a bucket			
After painting with water-based paint I clean paint brushes over a soil area			
We pick up our dog's droppings			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

Why should we look after our water?

Water should be conserved because it costs money to use and there is not enough of it. Most Australian cities have only just enough water for their present population – if we keep using the same amount of water then we will run out as our population grows. This means that we will have to build more dams and more pipes and infrastructure and that means more taxes to pay for it.

Added to this we are also polluting our rivers, oceans and creeks. You might have heard in the news that our rivers are dying but do you know what this means? In some cases it means that they are so polluted that the water is no longer fit for drinking and that many of the fish and other animals that depend on the water are under threat. The pollution comes from many different sources including salinity, sewage, industry, development and from our homes in cities, towns and rural areas. We all seem to find it difficult to remember that stormwater drains from our homes and in our streets usually runs straight into the local waterways, creeks, rivers or the beach. This water carries a whole lot of unpleasant things like detergents, oil, grass clippings, leaves, dog poo, paint, cigarette butts and paints.

What else can you do?

In the house

- Fix all leaking taps: A leaking tap can waste 120 litres of water a day
- Take shorter showers.
- Install reduced-flow shower heads.
- Don't leave the water running when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Use recycled bath, shower and laundry wastewater in the garden, but not on edible plants or vegetables.
- Do not rinse dishes or wash vegetables under a running tap. Instead, partially fill a sink or bowl with rinsing water.
- A dishwasher is more economical than hand washing only if used properly. Use it once a day or only when it is full.
- Keeping a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator stops the need to run the cold tap until the water is cool enough.
- Make sure the washing machine is fully loaded and adjust the water level to match the load.
- If you are buying a new machine use the water-use labeling scheme to guide your choice. The more shaded 'A's the greater the efficiency.
- Front-loading machines use less water than top-loading machines.

In the garden

- ▣ Improve your soils water holding capacity by adding organic material, such as compost, manure, chopped lucerne or sawdust.
- ▣ Choose plants that use less water – ask a local keen gardener or garden centre for advice.
- ▣ The time and length of watering depends on the soil and plant types in the garden. Watering should be done when it is cooler and there is little wind.
- ▣ Mulch suppresses weed growth, reduces evaporation and runoff, and keeps the soil cool in summer. To be effective, mulch should be around 75mm thick.
- ▣ Householders use most of their garden water on lawns. Plan lawn areas to match your needs and consider cutting down the size of lawn areas.
- ▣ In summer water your garden less often, but more deeply. A good soak once a week is more beneficial to most plants than a light surface sprinkling once a day.
- ▣ Sweep your paths and driveways – don't use the hose to wash them down.
- ▣ Use buckets of water to wash the car and do it on the lawn.

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do either as a group or in your own home. This might include:

- ▣ Install reduced-flow shower heads in the bathroom.
- ▣ Get some free mulch from local stables or spoilt hay from a farm.
- ▣ Organise a low water use plant swap at your Community Centre.
- ▣ Ask your local government environment section to come and talk to you about any water saving services or advice they can offer.
- ▣ Find out some more about the water quality in your local area. Contact your regional Waterwatch coordinator.
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures and posters in Section 5 will help if you need more information about water use:

- ▣ Save water, money and the environment
- ▣ Water wise garden book
- ▣ Stormwater pollution: the difference is you
- ▣ Every drop counts: saving water starts in your own backyard
- ▣ Easy mulching guide

Or you might also like to check out information from:

- ▣ Sydney Water on water conservation and recycling at **www.sydneywater.com.au/everydropcounts/index.cfm** (for those who live in the Sydney, Blue Mountains and the Illawarra regions).

- ▣ Hunter Water on water conservation and recycling www.hunterwater.com.au/
- ▣ NSW Government Stormwater website www.environment.nsw.gov.au/stormwater/
- ▣ Waterwatch and Streamwatch – community action networks monitoring water quality www.waterwatch.org.au or www.streamwatch.org.au

For other contacts related to water conservation and issues such as catchments, clean coasts and beaches, marine issues and fishing, see the contacts list in Section 4.

Did you know?

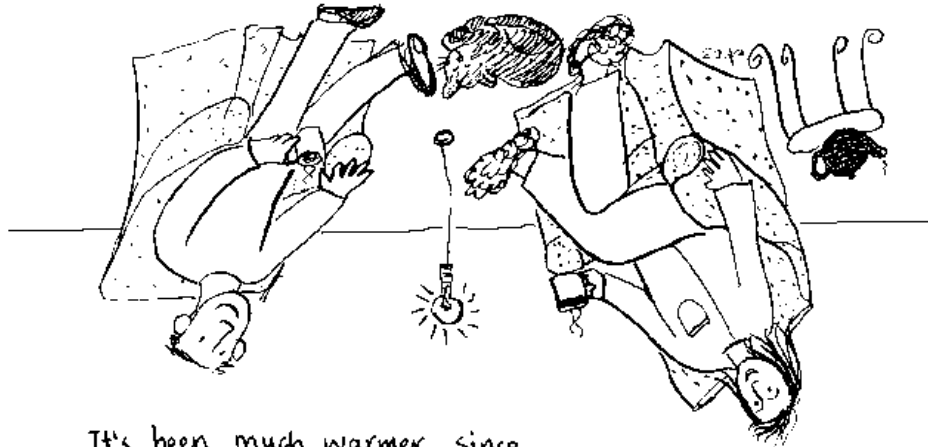
A hose can use 1000 litres of water an hour. Remember to turn the tap off when you have finished. Australians use more than 1 million litres of fresh water per person each year. This compares with North America's 2 million, Central America's 900,000, Europe's 600,000, south America's 350,000 and Africa's 200,000 litres per person

Thinking about water issues after your meeting

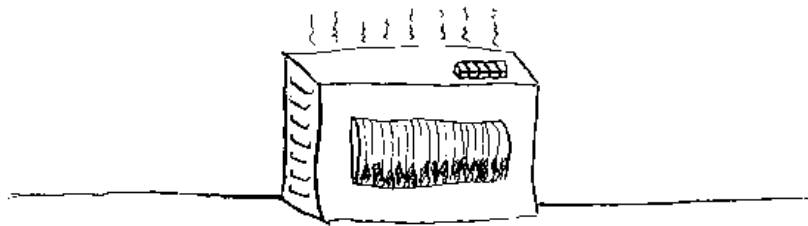
Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? You might like to ask someone from your local council to talk to the group to find out about water supply, sewage treatment or stormwater issues.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Action guide: Taking steps to reduce energy use



It's been much warmer since
we worked out where all the heat is!



How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

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Some useful tips:

- ▣ Try to encourage quiet people to speak. Those who tend to speak a lot in groups should not forget the benefits of listening!
- ▣ Disagreement is to be expected. Acknowledge it and move on.
- ▣ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ▣ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Energy – how to save it because you never have enough

Making houses energy efficient leads to a reduction in the amount of energy used. This saves money and reduces the amount of energy needed to produce electricity. It also helps the environment because less greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, are released into the atmosphere.

Energy savings in the home can be achieved by:

- ▣ designing and building a house so it is energy efficient
- ▣ using energy efficient appliances
- ▣ being careful not to waste energy.

Questions

1. Have you ever lived or stayed in a place where there wasn't electricity? Maybe camping or staying in the country somewhere. Perhaps you have lived through an extended power black out. What impact did this have on your lifestyle? Can you imagine what it must be like for millions of people who live like that all the time?
2. Where and how is your electricity produced?
3. What do you know of sustainable energy sources, such as solar or wind?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I regularly turn off the lights when they're not in use			
I use energy efficient (compact fluorescent) light bulbs			
I put on a jumper when it is cold instead of turning on the heater			
My house or unit is insulated			
I use certified 'Green Power'			
I have a solar hot water system			
I have installed draft excluders and door seals			

I purchase locally and Australian made products			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

Saving energy at home

Most housing in Australia is designed for consumer convenience and low cost. The great majority of housing development has given little attention to the environment. Every year the average home produces roughly twice as much greenhouse gas as the family car although several initiatives are making inroads into this situation.

For example in NSW, local governments have been invited to join the Energy Smart Homes program which uses a software program to rate energy efficiency. New home development approval is dependent on gaining a suitable rating.

Increasingly local governments and consumers are becoming aware of the importance of buildings that are designed for the Australian environment and are energy efficient.

In cool climates passive solar heating is becoming increasingly popular. These houses should be well insulated, north facing with large windows on that side, and few on the south side. A glassed-in area on the north side can collect heat in the winter which can be conducted to the rest of the house. In summer this house should have outside shutters or blinds on the north-facing windows to keep it cool. Deciduous trees, planted around its northern walls, would cool it in summer by shading it with their leaves, but let the sunlight through in winter. Overhanging eaves are also important as they will shade out the high summer sun, but allow the sunshine in from the lower winter sun.

What else can you do?

The position of your house in relation to the seasonal changes of the sun's position is important. What we all want, but are not lucky to get, is a house that catches the winter sun into the living rooms and keeps it out in summer. But there are other things we can do to be more energy efficient:

- Insulate walls, ceilings and floors to control heat loss or gain.
- Choose curtains that insulate windows.
- Drafts – seal gaps around external doors and windows to stop drafts – this can be as simple as using a draft sausage.
- Plant deciduous trees along the northern aspects of your home so they will not block the winter sun when they grow.
- Choosing energy efficient appliances such as off-peak hot water systems, radiant, halogen and induction cook tops, and in-slab floor heating. Major new household appliances have an energy efficiency rating. The more stars, the greater the efficiency.
- Replace conventional globes with compact fluorescent globes.
- Use a ceiling fan to help distribute heat.
- Turn off appliances like your stereo or computer instead of leaving them on stand-by.

In the bathroom

Reduce the amount of hot water you use:

- ▣ Take shorter showers
- ▣ Fit a clock or timer in the bathroom – three minutes is an adequate shower
- ▣ Install reduced-flow shower heads
- ▣ Open a window to let steam escape rather than using an exhaust fan.

In the kitchen

- ▣ Use an energy efficient 5 star rating refrigerator
- ▣ Use the microwave whenever possible
- ▣ Use energy efficient cooking methods:
 - Minimum grilling
 - Minimum water in pots
 - Put the lid on the pot
 - Simmer instead of boil

In the laundry

- ▣ Wash in cold water
- ▣ Use the dryer only when you have to – sunlight does it for free
- ▣ Use an energy efficient 5 star rating washing machine.

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do either as a group or in your own home. This might include:

- ▣ Replace blown conventional globes with compact fluorescent globes – buy them when they are on special.
- ▣ Turn off appliances like your television or stereo instead of leaving them on stand-by when not in use.
- ▣ Contact your local energy supplier, perhaps someone can come and talk to you about any energy saving services or advice they can offer.
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures in Section 5 will help if you need more information about energy:

- ▣ How to live energy smart
- ▣ Green Power
- ▣ Global Warming Cool it!

Or you might also like to check out these websites:

- ▣ Tips on living and working energy smart **www.energysmart.com.au**
- ▣ Organisations who can provide energy efficient products and services **www.energysmartallies.com**
- ▣ Green Power **www.greenpower.com.au**
- ▣ Reducing greenhouse gases **www.greenhouse.gov.au**

For other contacts on energy conservation and greenhouse gases see the contacts list in Section 4.

Did you know?

Green Power – is energy you can buy from renewable sources such as wind, solar and hydro-power. Choosing a clean energy alternative makes it easy to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions at home and at work. Around 60,000 customers across Australia have chosen accredited Green Power, including 2,500 businesses, resulting in over 100 new renewable energy projects in Australia since 1997.

Thinking about energy issues after your meeting

Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? You might like to ask someone from your local energy authority to talk to the group to find out about where your energy is generated and how to reduce energy use.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Action guide: Taking steps to reduce chemical use and dispose of unwanted chemicals



Daddy, do you think the fish really need those?

How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

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Some useful tips:

- ▣ Try to encourage quiet people to speak. Those who tend to speak a lot in groups should not forget the benefits of listening!
- ▣ Disagreement is to be expected. Acknowledge it and move on.
- ▣ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ▣ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Chemicals – take care

Our homes are full of chemicals that help us do many everyday things. We use them in the garden, kitchen, laundry and the bathroom. Many of these chemicals can be dangerous to us and it can be difficult to know which ones are potentially a problem.

We use chemical products as tools in our daily lives. They can help us to beautify our homes and can make tedious cleaning jobs easier. They also help control insects and assist in fixing or maintaining all manner of things around the home. When we have finished using these products many chemicals remain in our surroundings – in the air, the soil and waterways in our homes. Some accumulate in our bodies and can remain there for many years. Others break down more quickly but in the process damage living things and pollute the environment.

People can absorb poisons either through the skin, by swallowing or by breathing them in. Poisons reach the environment through spraying, evaporation, spillage, disposal or seepage through the ground.

Different chemicals and different degrees of exposure produce different effects on the body. These range from acute poisoning through to chronic and delayed effects.

It is possible to significantly reduce the chemicals around your home and make a positive step to minimising the impacts of chemicals on your health and the environment.

Questions

1. What household and garden chemicals do you use? What alternatives are there to these chemicals?
2. Does anyone in your family suffer from asthma? If so, do some chemicals make them worse?
3. What can you do with unwanted medicines?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I avoid using chemicals in the garden			
I buy organic food where possible			
I use compost and/or animal manure to fertilise my garden			
I use companion plants to minimise pest damage in the veggie patch			
I return unwanted medicines to the pharmacy			
I use screen on doors and windows to keep insects out			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

What else can you do?

You can reduce your use of chemicals in lots of ways; think about some of these:

In your house

- ▣ Ask older people how they cleaned things before the rise in the use of chemicals
- ▣ Buy or borrow a green guide book. These books give lots of information about using environmentally safe ways of cleaning most things and removing stains
- ▣ Take all unwanted medicines back to the pharmacy.

In your garden

- ▣ Talk to an organic gardener about how they manage pests and diseases in their garden
- ▣ Join a local organic gardeners or permaculture group
- ▣ Use pyrethrum based pesticides.

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do either as a group or in your own home. This might include:

- ▣ Go and visit a local organic farm.
- ▣ Ask someone from the Asthma Association to come and speak to you about chemical allergies.
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures in Section 5 will help if you need more information about reducing the use of chemicals and disposing of them safely:

- ▣ Easy guide to green cleaning
- ▣ Return your unwanted medicines to your pharmacy

You may also want to check out information on chemicals in your environment on the Total Environment Centre's website: www.tec.nccnsw.org.au/member/tec/projects/tcye/

Did you know?

The Return Unwanted Medicines (RUM) project enables consumers to return unwanted or out-of-date medicines to any pharmacy – look for the large yellow containers or ask your pharmacist.

Poison Information is available all over Australia (Phone 13 1126)

Thinking about chemical issues after your meeting

Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? You might like to ask someone from your local council or the Environment Protection Authority to talk to the group about reduction of chemical use.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Action guide:

Taking steps to maintain biodiversity



How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

This action guide will work best if you have a nominated facilitator: either choose a facilitator beforehand or ask the group if anyone can fulfill this role. A good facilitator should be open-minded, friendly, a good listener, and sensitive to the needs and interests of group members.

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- ▣ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ▣ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Biodiversity – what is it?

Biodiversity is the term for biological diversity — which simply means the variety of all life forms on earth. It includes the different plants and animals and the natural system they live in (ecosystems). Biodiversity is not static, but constantly changing. It can be increased by such things as evolutionary processes and it can be decreased by such things as habitat destruction.

Biodiversity is lost when species become extinct or restricted or when habitats are destroyed or degraded so that fewer species can survive. While biodiversity has always fluctuated in the past due to things like climate change, disease cycles and natural disasters, human impacts are now reducing biodiversity at an unprecedented rate. This habitat loss is also compounded by introduced species of plants and animals.

Questions

1. What does biodiversity mean to you?
2. What native animals do you share your backyard or local park with?
3. Do you know of any threatened species of animals or plants in your area?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I plant local native plants in my garden			
I enjoy seeing native birds and butterflies in the garden or local park			
I visit nearby parks or nature reserves			
I am active in a group which looks after native bushland			
I remove plants from my garden when I know they are weeds which might invade bushland			
I take steps to stop the cat from catching native birds and animals			
When we go fishing we throw back small fish			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

Why should we look after biodiversity?

Australia's biodiversity is huge – we have more species of plants and animals than any other developed country. Our biodiversity provides us with many important benefits. Think about things like:

- ▣ Food
- ▣ Medicines
- ▣ Recreation

And then there are the things that often aren't counted – like protecting our creeks and rivers, recycling nutrients, pollution breakdown, wood products and cultural values.

Conserving the biodiversity of NSW is a major challenge. Setting aside land in National Parks is an important way that we can protect biodiversity, but community involvement in conservation is essential.

What else can you do?

You can understand more about biodiversity and take action to conserve it in many ways, think about some of these:

- ▣ Join a local conservation organisation – you should be able to find contacts for these through your local Environment Centre or Conservation Council
- ▣ Ask the Environmental Officer at your Local Government to come and speak to you
- ▣ Join a group who take an interest in local bushland or plants – like the Society for Growing Native Plants, or a Bush walkers group (you don't need to walk long distances with many of these groups)
- ▣ Check out the Eco-friendly Community section of this kit for more ideas about local environmental projects
- ▣ Talk to your Local Aboriginal Land Council, elders or corporation and invite them to come and talk about their knowledge and memories of the area

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do either as a group or in your own home. This might include:

- ▣ Talk to your local garden nursery about local native plants
- ▣ Organise a group picnic at your nearest National Park. Contact your local National Parks office to find out about Discovery walks, tours and talks.
- ▣ Buy a field guide to local birds and animals and learn about their habits and needs
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochures in Section 5 will help if you need more information about biodiversity:

- ▣ Backyard buddies
- ▣ There's life in that log

You could also check out these websites and organisations:

- ▣ For information on community conservation, National Parks and biodiversity visit **www.environment.nsw.gov.au**
- ▣ Environmental groups addressing biodiversity and conservation issues in NSW **www.nccnsw.org.au** or **www.acfonline.org.au**
- ▣ Look in your local phone book to see if there is a phone number for Wildlife Information and Rescue Service (WIRES). These volunteers will treat damaged or sick wild animals until they can be re-released. You might like to put their number on display in your centre.

For other contacts on biodiversity or other related issues such as natural resources, conservation, parks and botanic gardens, see the contacts list in Section 4.

Did you know?

Australia is home to more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are unique.

About 82% of our mammals and 93% of our frogs are found nowhere else in the world.

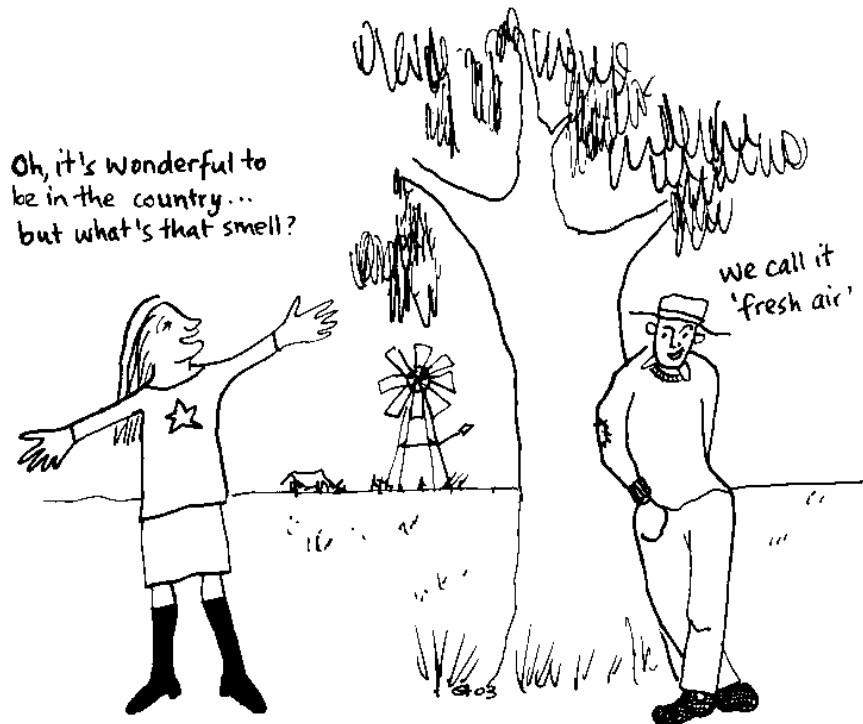
Australia has lost 75% of its rainforests and has the world's worst record of mammal extinctions.

Thinking about biodiversity issues after your meeting

Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? You might like to ask someone from either the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Greening Australia or The National Parks Association to talk to the group to find out more about biodiversity in your area. Maybe someone in the group has a contact for one of these organisations, or check your local phone book for contacts.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Action guide: Taking steps to protect the Air



How to have a productive discussion about the issue with friends

This action guide will work best if you have a nominated facilitator: either choose a facilitator beforehand or ask the group if anyone can fulfill this role. A good facilitator should be open-minded, friendly, a good listener, and sensitive to the needs and interests of group members.

Some useful tips:

- ▣ Try to encourage quiet people to speak. Those who tend to speak a lot in groups should not forget the benefits of listening!
- ▣ Disagreement is to be expected. Acknowledge it and move on.
- ▣ Stick with the subject and don't get sidetracked.
- ▣ Close the session by asking each member to summarise something that they have gained from the discussion.

Air quality affects our health

Most of us in Australia think that our air quality is pretty good – but many of us suffer from asthma or our children do. Asthma sufferers are very sensitive to air quality. While we might like to think that air pollution is caused by industry or other factors outside our direct influence the truth is that the main sources of air pollution in Australian towns and cities are:

- ▣ cars and light commercial vehicles
- ▣ pollution from wood heaters and backyard burning
- ▣ some towns and cities are adversely affected by small and medium sized industries – in Australia most heavy industry is found outside cities.

This means that we can make some changes which will improve air quality by improving the way we manage our cars and our wood heaters.

Cars, cars and cars

Australia is a nation of car owners and car users. While we may understand that using public transport is better for the environment we have been spoiled by the convenience of cars. Public transport is often not readily available in regional and country areas and use of public transport in cities has not increased in the last 20 years.

Cars are one of our main rights of passage for young people. Our children usually can't wait to get their car drivers licence and use our cars or save for their own. The number of cars on our roads is increasing more quickly than the population.

Burning wood heaters

Whenever you have a fire you get smoke, but what is smoke? Wood smoke contains chemicals like methane, hydrogen and many tars and oils. These tend to clump together once they cool down. When they get up into the atmosphere they can become a major source of air pollution.

Questions

1. How difficult would it be if you didn't own a car? Do you know people in your community who don't own a car? How do they manage?
2. What public transport is there in your area?
3. What type of air pollution is there in your area? Do you notice wood smoke hanging around in your town or city in the winter?

What are you doing already?

These questions are not to make you feel guilty but to see how much you do already and to share your ideas and reasons with others.

What I do now	Yes	No	What stops me
I try to use public transport for some trips each week			
If I am buying a car I consider environmental factors like fuel efficiency and emission control			

When I go to the city I use buses and trains			
If I have time, I prefer to travel by train			
Whenever I can I walk or use a bike for short trips			
I encourage my children to walk to school			
Whenever I can I arrange to pick up other people going to the same place so that they don't need to take their own car			
I use dry seasoned wood in our heater			
I know how to manage a wood fire to minimise the amount of smoke			
Other – what other things do you do that may not be listed here?			

Why should we reduce our use of cars?

More than half the air pollution in Sydney on a typical day comes from motor vehicles. If everyone in Sydney walked, cycled or caught public transport one day a week, around 2,400 tonnes of smog-forming chemicals and 13 tonnes of fine particle pollution would be eliminated each year.

What else can you do?

You don't have to get rid of your car to make changes to the environment. Try to make some small changes and your health and the environment can benefit.

- ☐ Walk or ride a bike for short trips
- ☐ Find out about local public transport and use it when you can
- ☐ Relax by taking a train trip when you go to visit friends who live near the railway
- ☐ Consider the tables produced by motoring organisations to see how efficient cars are before you buy your next car – it could save you more than the increased price in reduced running costs.

The same goes for your wood heater, if you use one

- ☐ Burn dry, seasoned, untreated wood
- ☐ Keep your wood in a dry place
- ☐ Keep the fire burning brightly so that it doesn't smoulder and produce too much smoke
- ☐ If you are buying a new heater ask for one that conforms to the Australian Standard AS4013.

Make a commitment

Go back to your responses to the questionnaire and think about what stops you from doing some of these things. From your discussion with others in your group write down three things you can do to reduce your use of cars. This might include:

- ▣ Use the telephone instead of making a trip in the car
- ▣ Combine the trip with other things you have to do – just take one trip instead of two or three
- ▣ When you are organising a meeting or event, include information about how people can get there by public transport
- ▣ Buy your firewood from a registered firewood merchant
- ▣ Learn how to use your heater to minimise pollution
- ▣ What other ideas has your list thrown up?

More information

The brochure in Section 5 will help if you need more information about protecting the air:

- ▣ Woodsmoke – Stay warm, breathe easy

Or you might also like to check out these websites:

- ▣ NSW Environment Protection Authority for information on air pollution issues such as woodsmoke, odour, and reporting smoky vehicles **www.environment.nsw.gov.au**
- ▣ Smogbusters: **www.smogbusters.net.au**
- ▣ Environment Australia's Community Information unit: **www.environment.gov.au/atmosphere/airquality**

For more information on air pollution, transport issues and planning see the contacts list in Section 4.

Did you know?

Between 50–80% of our air pollution comes from motor vehicle exhaust fumes

If you reduce your car travelling speed on the open road to 90kmph you reduce petrol use by 20%

Cold engines pollute more – if you can combine your trips you will be using a warmed up engine

Smog is caused when chemicals in the atmosphere react to sunlight.

Thinking about air quality after your meeting

Are there any areas where the group wanted to get more information? Some local government areas will have an environmental officer who will know about local air quality issues. You might find that there is a registered local firewood merchant who will speak to you about how to use a wood heater efficiently without causing pollution. Try your local phone book for contacts.

Often people think of great ideas a day or two after a group discussion. Try to make a time to share any new ideas or suggestions.

Sustaining Eco-friendly Communities: a Local Community Centre workshop on waste reduction

Reducing waste can be done by thinking about it in three easy steps:

- ▣ Avoid – if we use less now there will be less waste later. Avoid buying products with too much packaging and look for recycling symbols
- ▣ Reuse – it makes more sense to reuse an existing product, to have it repaired or modified than it does to spend time and energy recycling it
- ▣ Recycle – the materials in these products can be broken down and used to make something new

Aim

Using local knowledge and experience and the resources in the Action Kit, participants will, either individually or as a group, develop and implement strategies for on-going waste reduction.

Objectives

- ▣ To ensure that the workshop is relevant to participants needs
- ▣ Understand how waste has increased dramatically with our modern lives
- ▣ Identify what goes into our own bins
- ▣ Understand where our waste goes and how it is disposed of
- ▣ See how services in our local areas can help us reduce waste
- ▣ Make some choices about how we can reduce waste – as individuals or as a group

Time	Activity	Comments/materials
10 min	Introductions / icebreaker	You might like to ask everyone to introduce themselves and identify one issue about waste that concerns them.
10 min	Stories about waste	Either ask participants to tell stories about waste from their homes, when they were younger or use the story below to get them to discuss this.
10 min	What goes into your waste?	Using the diagram on page 3 of the Action Guide: taking steps to reduce waste, get participants to think about what they put in their bin. Find out if they recycle, compost, use op shops to recycle clothes etc
15 min	Where does it go?	<p>What happens to waste in your area? Where does your recycling go? Do you have special facilities for disposing of furniture, appliances, computers, mobile phones, paint, chemicals, unused pharmaceuticals ...what else? Are they recycled?</p> <p>This can be done in groups of 3 or 4 and then the information recorded for all to see on a whiteboard or butchers paper.</p>
10 min	Who helps?	What services, industries or groups are there in your area to help. This should include a range of Local Government services, maybe local nurseries recycle plant pots, pharmacies for medicines (RUM) etc.
10 min	How can we help?	Using the information you have generated and the avoid, reuse and recycle model identify 4 or 5 things you can do as individuals to reduce waste.
15 min	Does the group want to do something?	<p>If your session has thrown up ideas about what the group can do to reduce waste you may need to spend some time outlining it here or you may need a follow-up meeting to set out a plan.</p> <p>A few ideas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit your local recycling centre • Ask your Council if they will run a composting or worm farming workshop • Run a second hand, recycling day • Set up a furniture recycling service • Organise a group to discuss reducing waste
10 min	Summary	Ask participants to outline what they have got from the session and briefly go through the <i>Action Guide: Taking steps to reduce waste</i> handout.

Discussion starters

A starter waste story

I grew up in a country town. I guess we had a standard Australian half acre block. Once a week we put out a rubbish bin which was about a quarter the size of the ones we use now and was hardly ever full. Food waste, bones etc went to the dog or cat, kitchen scraps went to the chooks, garden prunings went into the compost and plastic bags, polystyrene and masses of packaging didn't really exist.

Or you might like to use this cartoon to think about recycling:



Some local people who can help

Sustaining Eco-friendly Communities: a Local Community Centre workshop on reducing water use

A lot of water is wasted because so many people don't think about where it comes from and where it goes after they use it. The average daily usage per person per day in Australia is 498 litres.

Aim

Using local knowledge and experience and the resources in the Action Kit, participants will, either individually or as a group, develop and implement strategies for on going reduction in water use.

Objectives

- ▣ To ensure that the workshop is relevant to participants needs
- ▣ Understand where their water comes from and issues that affect local waterways
- ▣ Share ideas about what we can do to save water and reduce water pollution
- ▣ Understand the importance of recycling water
- ▣ See how services in our local areas can help us reduce water use
- ▣ Make some choices about how we can reduce water use— as individuals or as a group

Time	Activity	Comments/materials
10 min	Introductions / icebreaker	You might like to ask everyone to introduce themselves and identify one issue about water that concerns them.
10 min	Stories about water	<p>Use these questions to get the group thinking and sharing stories about water:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you, or people you know, ever lived in a place where you had to rely on rainfall collected in tanks? How does this affect the way people use water? What do people do to save water? • Where does your drinking water come from? Is it a dam, a river, tanks or ground water?
15 min	What do you do to save water at your place	Develop a list of what people are already doing to reduce water use – water saving shower rose, short showers, lower water use plants in the garden, use mulch in the garden, sweep paths and cement areas, wash the car with a bucket, storm water goes into a tank for toilets or garden use etc.
10 min	What happens to waste water	<p>Some houses these days have waste water recycling – this can be simple or elaborate but it makes sense to think about it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you reuse 'grey' water – say from the laundry? • Where does your stormwater go to? How can you reuse it? • What are the major issues that are impacting on your local waterways (e.g. creek, beach, river)? How can you help to protect this water quality? <p>You might like to do this in small groups with groups considering the three points above and then coming together to share their ideas.</p>
10 min	Who helps?	What services, industries or groups are there in your area to help. This should include a range of Local Government services, or your water authority, a local plant nursery may advise on low water use plants and water efficient garden design, maybe there is a local green plumber.
10 min	How can we help?	Using the information you have generated identify 4 or 5 things you can do as individuals to reduce waste.

15 min	Does the group want to do something?	<p>If your session has thrown up ideas about what the group can do to reduce water use you may need to spend some time outlining it here or you may need a follow-up meeting to set out a plan.</p> <p>A few ideas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit your water recycling facility • Ask your local Water Authority or provider if they will help you by running reduce water use workshops • Contact NCOSS and register for water audit training • Lobby your Local Government to provide free mulch for gardeners • Organise a group to discuss reducing water use
10 min Summary		<p>Ask participants to outline what they have got from the session and briefly go through the <i>Action Guide: Taking steps to reduce water use and avoid water pollution</i> handout.</p>

Discussion starter

You might like to use this cartoon to think about water use:



Some local people who can help

Sustaining Eco-friendly Communities: a Local Community Centre workshop on reducing energy use

Many of us are becoming aware of the importance of buildings that are designed for the Australian environment and are energy efficient.

Energy saving at home can be achieved by:

- ▣ Rating your home to understand where you are using energy and where you can make savings
- ▣ Using energy efficient appliances
- ▣ Being careful not to waste energy

Aim

Using local knowledge and experience and the resources in the Action Kit, participants will, either individually or as a group, develop and implement strategies for on going reduction in energy use.

Objectives

- ▣ To ensure that the workshop is relevant to participants needs
- ▣ Understand where their electricity and gas comes from and what it costs
- ▣ Share ideas about what we can do to save energy and gas
- ▣ See how services in our local areas can help us reduce energy use
- ▣ Make some choices about how we can reduce energy use – as individuals or as a group

Time	Activity	Comments/materials
10 min	Introductions /icebreaker	You might like to ask everyone to introduce themselves and identify one issue about energy use that interests them
10 min	Stories about energy use	Use these questions to get the group thinking about energy use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever lived or stayed in a place where there wasn't electricity? Maybe camping or staying in the country somewhere. Perhaps you have lived through an extended power black out. What impact did this have on your lifestyle? Can you imagine what it must be like for millions of people who live like that all the time? • Where and how is your electricity produced? • What do you know of sustainable energy sources, such as solar or wind?
10 min	What do you do to save energy at your place	Develop a list of what people are already doing to reduce energy use – water saving shower rose, short showers, insulation, insulated curtains, draft stopping, use compact fluorescent globes, etc
10 min	Who helps?	What services, industries or groups are there in your area to help. This should include a range of Local Government services, and/or your power provider, there may be an Energy Smart Program in your area, or you can use the website www.energysmarthome.com.au to do your own home audit
10 min	How can we help?	Using the information you have generated identify 4 or 5 things you can do as individuals to reduce energy use
15 min	Does the group want to do something?	If your session has thrown up ideas about what the group can do to reduce energy use you may need to spend some time outlining it here or you may need a follow-up meeting to set out a plan. A few ideas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the group to come back together after doing a home energy audit • Ask your Local Energy Authority or provider if they will help you by running reduce energy use workshops • Contact NCOSS and register for energy audit training • Organise a group to discuss reducing energy use
10 min	Summary	Ask participant to outline what they have got from the session and briefly go through the Action Guide : Taking steps to reduce energy use handout

Discussion starter

You might like to use this cartoon to think about energy use:



Some local people who can help

Sustaining Eco-friendly Communities: a Local Community Centre workshop on reducing chemical use

We use chemical products as tools in our daily lives. They can help us to beautify our homes and can make tedious cleaning jobs easier. They also help control insects and assist in fixing or maintaining all manner of things around the home. When we have finished using these products many chemicals remain in our surroundings – in the air, the soil and waterways in our homes. Some accumulate in our bodies and can remain there for many years. Others break down more quickly but in the process damage living things and pollute the environment.

Aim

Using local knowledge and experience and the resources in the Action Kit, participants will, either individually or as a group, develop and implement strategies for on going reduction in chemical use.

Objectives

- ▣ To ensure that the workshop is relevant to participants needs
- ▣ Understand that chemicals are in most household cleaning and garden products
- ▣ Share ideas about what we can do to reduce chemical use in our homes and gardens
- ▣ See how services, groups and organisations in our local areas can help us reduce chemical use
- ▣ Know where to dispose of unwanted medicines
- ▣ Make some choices about how we can reduce chemical use – as individuals or as a group

Time	Activity	Comments/materials
10 min	Introductions /icebreaker	You might like to ask everyone to introduce themselves and identify one issue about energy use that interests them
10 min	Stories about chemical use	Use these questions to get the group thinking about chemical use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What household and garden chemicals do you use? What alternatives are there to these chemicals? • Does anyone in your family suffer from asthma? If so, do some chemicals make them worse? • What can you do with unwanted medicines?
10 min	What do you do to reduce chemical use at your place	Develop a list of what people are already doing to reduce chemical use – grow their own organic vegetables, use compost and manure to fertilise the garden, use screens and natural ways to keep insects away, use natural cleaning products etc
10 min	Who helps?	What services, industries or groups are there in your area to help. This should include a range of Local Government services, and/or your local organic gardening groups, permaculture, pharmacies who take back unused or unwanted medicines, you might like to borrow some green cleaning guide books from your local library.
10 min	How can we help?	Using the information you have generated identify 4 or 5 things you can do as individuals to reduce chemical use
15 min	Does the group want to do something?	If your session has thrown up ideas about what the group can do to reduce chemical use you may need to spend some time outlining it here or you may need a follow-up meeting to set out a plan. A few ideas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the group to come back together to do a workshop on making our own cleaning products, micro-fibre cleaning or organic gardening • Contact the Total Environment Centre to find out about their Hazardous Household Chemicals program • Organise a group to discuss reducing chemical use
10 min	Summary	Ask participant to outline what they have got from the session and briefly go through the Action Guide : Taking steps to reduce chemical use and dispose of unwanted chemicals handout

Discussion starter

You might like to use this cartoon to think about chemicals:



Bleach! Gosh, how could I live without it? In the kitchen, laundry, swimming pool, and of course, in my hair! I just love my chemicals!

Some local people who can help

The Return Unwanted Medicines (RUM) project enables consumers to return unwanted or out-of-date medicines to any pharmacy – look for the large yellow containers or ask your pharmacist.

Poison information is available all over Australia – phone 13 1126

Section 3



How to be part of an eco-friendly community

This section of the kit contains ideas and contacts so that your Neighbourhood Centre can get involved in environmental projects in your local community, with other environmental groups, or your local council.

Australia has a great record in community action for the environment. Our towns cities and country areas all have community groups working on local projects. Becoming involved in one of these projects helps the local environment and also helps to build your local community. You can start small and join an existing project or you might like to find out how to set up your own project. The kit has some ideas listed below that have already been done, but your community is likely to have its own unique environmental problems and issues that need attention.

To join an existing environmental project

- (a) Identify an environmental issue that is being worked on in your community.
- (b) Get some basic information about the project. You may need to identify the type of environmental issue and use this kit to find what department or existing environment group is involved. You can also contact the environment officer in your council who might know the details of the group responsible.
- (c) Contact the group responsible for the project and have a chat. You will need to get a sense of whether if they would be pleased with your involvement. You will also need to determine who the 'drivers' of the project are, how the group is managed and who has responsibility for deciding what the project will do and how funds will be spent. It is most likely that the group will be delighted to have some additional support.
- (d) Investigate if this project is suitable for your Centre to be involved in. Find out what resources, staff, money, expertise and time you would need to invest. If you are still interested, put a preliminary proposition to your management committee, that you should further investigate your Neighbourhood Centre being involved in the project.
- (e) Invite representatives of the existing project to talk to you, your management committee and/or your participants about what you can do together.
- (f) It is a good idea when joining an existing project, to get in writing what your involvement will be. You can also set a time frame for reconsidering your involvement. Commit for one year, then have both organisations review and agree to further work.

For example, you may have noticed a lot of trees being planted in your local area. You could contact the bushcare or environment officer in your council to obtain the contacts for the group responsible for this activity and invite them to talk to you, your management committee and/or your participants about what you can do together.

Section 4 includes a contacts list that may provide some information to get you started.

Do your own environmental project

Your Neighbourhood Centre might know of an environmental issue that needs attention in your community and no one else is involved. You can run your own small environmental project. Most neighbourhood centres have experience in running small projects that you can put to use in making your community more environmentally sustainable.

Identify the environmental issue you want to work on and gather some information about how to address the issue. Use this kit to find out which department or existing environment group may be involved. You can also contact the environment officer in your local council. Government departments, councils or environment organisations may have resources you can use.

Examples of planning community environment programs

Project 1

Is there a creek or a small piece of bushland in your neighbourhood. Would you like to see it cleaned up, the weeds removed and the area restored to its natural state? The following steps need to be followed to plan what you will do about the problem.

1. Identify who else is involved and who can help?

First you need to find out who owns or manages the creek or land. Then you could contact the landcare or bushcare officer or the environment officer in local government and ask them what you can do and how they can help you with your problem. Alternatively you could contact the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) and find out if there is a Landcare facilitator in your area. If it is a creek the Catchment Management Board may have made your creek a priority in their plans and may be able to assist you. If there is a big company near the land or creek ask them to help you restore the creek.

2. What is causing the problem?

If you are going to work to do something about the problem you will need to find out what and who caused the problem. If it is caused by local community members then involve them in fixing it or they may continue to cause the problem and undo all your work.

3. What can you do? What are your objectives?

Get everyone together and have a meeting to plan what to do about the problem. Brainstorm at that meeting how the creek or small piece of bushland would look at the end of your project. What do you need to do to achieve this and what are the steps in this process? Select the first achievable step to work on.

4. What tasks need to be done, when and who should do them?

To achieve the above objectives, plan the tasks that need to be done, by whom and when. One of the tasks maybe to look for and apply for funding. Or a member of your working group may be able to assist with funds or in kind support. For example the council may offer earth moving equipment and the bushcare may offer plants for revegetating the creek or bushland.

5. Remember to monitor the project

It is important to monitor the project so you have a record of your successes and what you may do differently next time. During the project and when you have finished the project you will want to let everyone in your community know about what you are doing and what are your successes.

Project 2

**Do you want to educate people about living sustainably?
It is important to plan your education project.**

1. Identify who else is involved and who can help?

Your education about living sustainably may be an issue that your local council, a local environment group or the local Aboriginal community is interested in. Contact them and ask them to assist you

in identifying exactly what your message is. Local council may have an environmental education officer or a cultural planner who can help with the project. Can they assist with funds? Or other skills.

2. *Who are you going to educate? Who is your target audience?*

Do you want to educate the participants and visitors to your centre, or the whole community? Or is it a particular section of the community? Once you know who your target audience is, you can investigate and find out more about them.

3. *What do you want to achieve? What are your objectives?*

Invite representatives of the target group and other interested organisations to the centre and brainstorm what you want to achieve with the education. This will identify your objectives. Discuss what would be the best way of achieving your objectives. Perhaps you could create a mural or hold a photographic exhibition showing people's feelings and experience of their local environment. Perhaps some street theatre?

4. *What tasks need to be done, when and who should do them?*

Develop an action list. Identify the tasks that need to be done, when they need to be done by and which member of your group will do them. May be one of the tasks is to look at funding and how to apply for it. Or a member of your working group may be able to assist with funds or in-kind support.

5. *Remember to monitor the project*

It is important to monitor the project so you have a record of your successes and what you may do differently next time. During the project and when you have finished the project you will want to let everyone in your community know about what you are doing and what are your successes.

For more help planning your project look at the resource centre on the DEC website **www.environment.nsw.gov.au** under 'community'.

Managing the project

Below are some steps to consider when getting involved in a community project:

1. Write up a Project Plan – it can be brief but should be similar to a government funding submission. This will help you identify the full range of things you need to consider before starting the project. The Project Plan can include:
 - ▣ a project description
 - ▣ who is responsible for the whole project
 - ▣ who approves the tasks and expenditure
 - ▣ who is responsible for individual pieces of work
 - ▣ how other groups and individuals will be involved
 - ▣ a timeframe
 - ▣ a budget
 - ▣ problems you might encounter and how they might be overcome.
2. Take this to your management committee for approval.
3. If you need support from the rest of the community, write up a snappy press release and approach the local media, council, service organisations and environment groups to tell them about the project.

4. Get the necessary approvals for starting the project from government authorities.
5. Use your community development skills to get people in your community involved.

A number of LCSA resources that you can use when planning your project are listed below. An order form is available from the LCSA website at www.lcsa.org.au.

- ▣ *Neighbourhood Centre Week 'How To' Kit*
- ▣ *The Community Action Book*, Marie Flood and Annee Lawrence, NCOSS
- ▣ *Making Your Mark – A Guide to Promoting Neighbourhood Centres and their Services*, Gael Kennedy, LCSA
- ▣ *Count me in! 501 ideas for recruiting volunteers*, Judy Esmond, PhD, Newseason Publications

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

We would like to re-design and replant the garden at our centre to make it more water efficient and to use indigenous plants.

- ▣ Try contacting your local TAFE College horticulture or bush regeneration section and ask them if the students could give you some advice. They may even be able to take it on as a project
- ▣ Talk to your local government environmental or bushcare officer to see if they can help – with plans, plants or anything else
- ▣ Contact the local landcare group or facilitator
- ▣ Visit your local garden nurseries and see if they can help

We would really like to link with young people to provide a positive image of the centre and it's role in the lives of people in our area

- ▣ Contact the Commonwealth Government's Green Corps program to see if they have a project in your area. This program is for 17–20 year olds to participate in innovative projects around the country and it includes a community venture
- ▣ Talk to the nearest Environment Centre or Conservation Council about being involved in World Environment Day activities (June each year)

We would like to establish a community garden

- ▣ Contact your local council to identify possible sites
- ▣ Contact your local TAFE college and ask the horticulture students to provide expertise and skills in site preparation and the establishment of the garden in partnership with centre participants.
- ▣ Ask the local nursery for a donation of plants and seeds
- ▣ Talk to other community centres and groups who have already established community gardens. You can get the contacts from the Community Builders website www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/ and search for community gardens.

Local environmental organisations and groups you could link with

Ask if anyone knows people and/or projects that can help you with information about local environmental projects. For example

- ▣ Is there a local Landcare or Coastcare officer?
- ▣ Does your local council have any of these ?
 - waste educator or waste officer
 - stormwater educator
 - environmental educator or environmental health officer
 - environment officer
 - bushcare/landcare officer
- ▣ Who is the Greening Australia contact in your area?

Who else do people in your Centre know who are involved in environmental projects?

More information

If you want more information about community groups, government departments and agencies please see the contacts list in Section 4.

Section 4



Evaluation, environmental contacts and grants

This section includes the following resources:

1. An evaluation form for this kit. If you use this kit, it would be great if you could complete this form and return it to the LCSA (Fax: (02) 9281 0386). These evaluations will assist us to improve the resources provided to Community Centres.
2. A list of environmental contacts, including state government agencies, and environmental groups and other relevant organisations. There is a column for you to complete with the names and details of your local contacts.
3. A list of grants currently available for environmental projects.

- ☐ Did you, or any members of your Centre, attend the regional workshop where this project was introduced? (✓ or ✗)
- ☐ If yes, were they helpful in organising your project? (✓ or ✗)
- ☐ Did you receive a grant from the LCSA for a sustainability project? (✓ or ✗)

Is there a story you could tell about your experience with this project? Use the space below to share your views. For example, the positive and negative aspects of your project; a story about a participant... or something else you might like to share! It would be great if you could send us in some of your photos. These would be used to publicise the project.

- ☐ Your project story...

You've finished! Now simply post, fax or email this to:

LCSA Eco-friendly Communities Project
6/66 Albion Street
Surry Hills, NSW 2010
Fax: 02 9281 0386
Email: info@lcsa.org.au

Environmental contacts

<p>Sustainable living</p>	<p>Our Environment, it's a Living Thing www.livingthing.nt.au Australian Conservation Foundation – Green Home www.acfonline.org.au</p>	
<p>Energy conservation, energy efficiency, greenpower, renewable energy, greenhouse gases</p>	<p>Energy Smart Information Centre: phone: 1300 138 638 www.energysmart.com.au Department of Energy, Utilities and Sustainability (DEUS) Phone: (02) 8281 7777 Your local energy supplier, for example: AGL phone: 13 12 45 www.agl.com.au Country Energy: phone 13 23 56 www.countryenergy.com.au EnergyAustralia: phone 13 15 25 www.energy.com.au Integral Energy: phone 13 10 02 www.integral.com.au/residential Australian Greenhouse Office: phone: (02) 6274 1888 www.greenhouse.gov.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>

<p>Waste issues, resource conservation, waste reduction, litter, illegal dumping, green waste and composting</p>	<p>Contact your local council to find out about waste disposal and waste collection in your local area.</p> <p>Services and resources in the Department of Environment and Conservation www.nsw.gov.au/environment.asp</p> <p>Waste Service NSW: phone: 1300 65 11 16 www.wasteservice.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Clean Up Australia: phone: (02) 9552 6177 www.cleanup.com.au</p> <p>Keep Australia Beautiful: phone: (02) 9633 3380 www.kabnsw.org.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
<p>Reporting pollution incidents (including smoky vehicle reporting)</p> <p>Environmental issues relating to air, noise, chemicals, pesticides, hazardous materials, radiation, stormwater</p> <p>Environmental education materials, social research</p>	<p>NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). Please note that the NSW Environment Protection Authority (NSW EPA) is now part of DEC</p> <p>Phone: 13 15 55 (environment information and publication requests) for the cost of a local call within NSW (mobiles excluded).</p> <p>Phone: 1300 36 19 67 (national parks information and publication requests) for the cost of a local call within NSW (mobiles excluded).</p> <p>TTY: (02) 9211 4723 (telephone typewriter for hearing impaired callers)</p> <p>Fax: (02) 9995 5999</p> <p>Community Educator Office: (02) 8837 6000 www.environment.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Environment Australia phone: (02) 6274 1111 www.ea.gov.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>

<p>Water conservation, drinking water, waste water, stormwater, healthy catchments, water monitoring</p>	<p>Sydney Water (for the Sydney, Illawarra and Blue Mountains areas) General Enquiries: 13 20 92. 24 Hour Emergency Hotline : 13 20 90 www.sydneywater.com.au</p> <p>Hunter Water (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens) Customer 1300 657 657 Emergency 1300 657 000 www.hunterwater.com.au</p> <p>In regional areas, your local government may be your water authority.</p> <p>Streamwatch (Sydney area): phone: (02) 8752 6400 Or Sydney Catchment Authority Streamwatch Phone: (02) 4725 2503 www.streamwatch.org.au</p> <p>Waterwatch: phone: (02) 9228 6571. www.waterwatch.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Sydney Catchment Authority: phone: 1300 72 24 68 www.sca.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Catchment Management Authorities Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA; Central West CMA; Hawkesbury-Nepean CMA; Hunter-Central Rivers CMA; Lachlan CMA; Lower Murray Darling CMA; Murray CMA; Murrumbidgee CMA; Namoi CMA; Northern Rivers CMA; South Rivers CMA; Western CMA.</p> <p>For contact details of CMAs see www.cma.nsw.gov.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
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<p>Coasts & Beaches</p>	<p>Beachwatch Department of Environment and Conservation: phone: 13 15 55 www.environment.nsw.gov.au/beach Coastcare State Coastcare Coordinator Department of Natural Resources Phone: (02) 9296 1663 www.andcareonline.com</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
<p>Marine issues, fishing, boating, protected areas & aquatic species</p>	<p>NSW Fisheries: phone: 1300 55 04 74 www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries Fishcare Volunteers: Contact NSW Fisheries Ph: (02) 9527 8411 NSW Maritime: phone 13 12 56 www.maritime.nsw.gov.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
<p>Natural resources such as land, soil, vegetation, landcare volunteering</p>	<p>Department of Natural Resources (Phone: 9228 6333 (Head Office) Landcare To find your local Landcare, Coastcare, Rivercare or Bushcare group, go to www.landcareonline.com NSW State Landcare Coordinator Phone: (02) 6391 3787 www.landcareonline.com Greening Australia www.greeningaustralia.org.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>

<p>Biodiversity, community conservation, natural and cultural heritage, protected areas, such as national parks, nature reserves, Aboriginal areas, historic sites, state recreation areas and regional parks, botanic gardens, community gardens</p>	<p>National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS): Phone: 1300 36 19 67 www.environment.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Royal Botanic Gardens www.environment.nsw.gov.au</p> <p>Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney Phone: (02) 9231 8111</p> <p>Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens (near Bilpin) Phone (02) 4567 2154</p> <p>Mount Annan Botanic Garden (near Camden) Phone: (02) 4648 2477</p> <p>Australian Community Gardens Network www.communitygarden.org.au/</p> <p>World Wildlife Fund Toll free: 1800 03 25 51 www.wwf.org.au</p>	<p>Your local contact:</p>
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<p>Environmental education in schools, pre-schools, environmental education centres, zoos</p> <p>Adult and community education, vocational education & training</p>	<p>Department of Education & Training Environmental Education Phone: (02) 9561 8000 www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au</p> <p>The NSW Department of Education and Training has 22 Environmental Education Centres (EECs), formerly known as Field Studies Centres, spread throughout the state. In addition, there are two and Zoo education centres, one located at mosman (Taronga) and the other at Dubbo (Western Plains). For locations and contact details please see www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au.</p> <p>TAFE NSW Horticulture and Bush Regeneration Section Information Line 13 16 01 or call your nearest institute www.tafensw.edu.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
<p>Planning issues</p>	<p>NSW Department of Planning Phone: (1300 30 56 95 www.planning.nsw.gov.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>

<p>Transport issues, public transport, cycling, walking</p>	<p>NSW bike maps Roads & Traffic Authority www.rta.nsw.gov.au/usingroads/bicycle/bicyclemaps/index.html</p> <p>Transport infoline: phone 13 15 00 www.131500.com.au</p> <p>Bicycle NSW: phone: (02) 9218 5400 www.bicyclensw.org.au</p> <p>Pedestrian Council of Australia: phone: (02) 9968 4544 www.walk.com.au</p> <p>Action for Public Transport www.aptnsw.org.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
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<p>Environment groups</p>	<p>Nature Conservation Council of NSW: phone: (02) 9279 2466 www.nccnsw.org.au (also provide links to local environment groups)</p> <p>Total Environment Centre: phone: (02) 9299 5599 www.fec.nccnsw.org.au</p> <p>Greenpeace Australia: phone: (02) 9261 4666 www.greenpeace.org.au</p> <p>Australian Conservation Foundation: phone: (02) 8270 9900 www.acfonline.org.au</p> <p>Planet Ark www.planetark.com.au</p> <p>Friends of the Earth www.foe.org.au</p> <p>Environmental Defenders Office: phone: (02) 9262 6989 www.edo.org.au</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
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<p>Aboriginal communities</p>	<p>NSW Aboriginal Lands Council (ALC) Phone: (02) 9689 4444 (head office) www.alc.org.au</p> <p>Aboriginal people protecting country Department of Environment and Conservation NSW www.environment.gov.au/education/aboriginalcommunities.htm</p> <p>see also www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/npws.nsf/Content/Cultural+Heritage</p> <p>Aboriginal Inadcare www.landcare.nsw.gov.au/Aboriginal.htm#support</p>	<p>Your local contacts:</p>
<p>Working with non-english speaking communities on environmental issues</p>	<p>Ethnic Communities Council Phone: (02) 9319 0288 www.eccnsw.org.au</p> <p>or Department of Environment and Conservation NSW Phone: (02) 8837 6003 www.livingthing.net.au/pp_main.htm</p>	

Grants for environment projects*

* Information current at June 2006.

Grant	Type of grant	Who for	Dates & funding	For information
Environmental Trust	Grants for: a. Restoration and Rehabilitation b. Education c. Protecting our places d. Eco schools	a. local government and community organisations. b. Community organisations c. Aboriginal communities d. Schools	See website for details – usually expressions of interest in December and grants announced in June	Environmental Trust Ph: (02) 8837 6093 www.environment.nsw.gov.au/grants/envtrust.htm
Australian Government Envirofund	Up to \$30,000 to carry out on-ground and other actions to target local problems. Areas of activity listed on website.	An incorporated community group, an indigenous community or organisation or an individual proposing activities that are of very high public benefit.	Applications early May	Commonwealth Government Natural Heritage Trust Ph: 1800 065 823 www.nht.gov.au
Grants to Voluntary Environment & Heritage Organisations	Assists with the administrative costs for eligible organisations.	Incorporated community groups; environment protection as primary objective; demonstrate community support & representativeness; non-profit org; membership number requirements.	See website for details.	Policy Projects Unit Environment Australia Ph: (02) 6274 1111 www.ea.gov.au/ppcd/ppu/gveho/index.html
Community Water Grants	Three themes for action: • water use, efficiency and conservation • water reuse and recycling • improving surface and ground water health	Community organisations who want to undertake on-ground actions to help solve local water problems.	See website for details.	Commonwealth Water Fund Ph 1800 78 07 30 www.communitywatergrants.gov.au

Grant	Type of grant	Who for	Dates & funding	For information
Community Cultural Development Grants: Skills & Arts Development	For projects which will assist in developing skills to initiate and conduct community cultural development activities.	Individuals, organisations and communities. Applicants must meet general eligibility requirements.	Usually two rounds each year – closing April and August. See website for details.	Australia Council for the Arts Ph: (02) 9215 9025 www.ozco.gov.au
Threatened Species Network Community Grant	Undertaking work related to threatened species	Incorporated community-based organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, are invited to apply for funding. Unincorporated groups may be considered where a government agency will undertake financial administration responsibility.	individual projects up to \$30,000 \$500,000 nationally	World Wide Fund for Nature Ph: (02) 8202 1233 www.wwf.org.au/
Area Assistance Scheme (AAS)	For projects that improve community well being and how communities function	Provides grants to local councils and non-government organisations	See website for details	NSW Department of Community Services www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/aas
Volunteer Small Equipment Grants	To encourage and support volunteers by enabling organisations to purchase equipment that contributes to making volunteering activities easier, safer and/or more enjoyable.	Community organisations	See website for details	Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services Ph: 1800 15 34 77 www.facs.gov.au

Grant	Type of grant	Who for	Dates & funding	For information
Green Corp	Green Corps is a Commonwealth Government youth development program offering people aged 17–20 the opportunity to receive quality training while participating in projects that contribute to significant environmental and cultural heritage initiatives. Green Corps teams are able to provide labour for environmental projects. Labour only – time available is variable.	Organisations can put in a proposal for a large project of which 1 month is allocated to do a 'mini-project' such as working with schools and Landcare groups	Proposals are submitted quarterly with projects starting 5–6 months after proposals are submitted	Green Corp Australia Ph: (02) 9560 9144 www.greencorps.com.au
Green Reserve	Green Reserve involves Australian's between the ages of 35 and 65 who are in receipt of Newstart allowance in local conservation projects. Green Reserve volunteers are able to provide labour for environmental projects, and can contribute 2 days a week for six months to the project.		Discuss your project with the Regional Manager at Conservation Volunteers Australia Offices	Conservation Volunteers Australia www.conservationvolunteers.com.au/index.asp CVA Regional Offices: Sydney (02) 9564 1244 Byron Bay (02) 6680 7840 Newcastle (02) 4926 2103 Bathurst (02) 6331 7711 Port Macquarie (02) 6583 9477 Wagga Wagga (02) 6920 1099

Grant	Type of grant	Who for	Dates & funding	For information
Mitre 10 Junior Landcare Grants Program	It provides the funds to enable young people to participate in local Landcare projects. Six environmental project categories within the Grants Program – Air, Water, Waste, Energy, Biodiversity and Land.	Schools and other youth organisations around Australia.	Up to \$500. See website for details.	Landcare Australia Ltd Ph: 1800 15 11 05 www.landcareaustralia.com.au
Landcare Australia Sponsorship Funding	All types of Landcare projects Suggestion minimum \$5000. You should contact your Landcare Coordinator to discuss the merit of your project. If LAL accepts your project there is no guarantee that funding will be available at that time you may need to wait until sponsorship money becomes available	Community organisations, landcare groups, schools	Open at all times	Landcare Australia Ltd Ph: 1800 15 11 05 www.landcareaustralia.com.au
Local Council Grants	Some Councils provide small grants	Community, schools		Local Council Officer

Other grants lists and information

NSW Community Builders Website

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/finding_funds/funding/

Commonwealth Government grants link

www.grantslink.gov.au

A guide to Community Grants

www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spgrants.htm

Heritage Grants Program and Funding

Australian Heritage Commission

www.ea.gov.au/heritage/programs/index.html

Funding Opportunities Pathway (information for Australia's environment business sector)

www.environet.ea.gov.au/topics/funding.html

Our Communities

www.ourcommunity.com.au

Philanthropy Australia

Provides an extensive list of private, family and corporate trusts and foundations that provide grants to a wide variety of individuals and groups.

www.philanthropy.org.au