



## GREEN GUIDE CARBON OFFSETS

# Neutralise your share of pollution

Taking steps to live a carbon-neutral life will improve your environment and help cut down emissions, says the Australian Conservation Foundation.

**A**USTRALIANS are responsible for the highest per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the developed world.

Greenhouse pollution levels in Australia are forecast to increase to 20 per cent above 1990 levels by 2020. In contrast, the European Commission recently made a commitment to reduce its emissions to 20 per cent below 1990 levels in the same period.

For Australia to play its part, we need to cut greenhouse pollution by:

At least 30 per cent by 2020 and  
80 to 90 per cent by 2050.

Australians everywhere are asking "What can I do?"

One suggestion is that people go "carbon neutral" or "offset" their greenhouse gas emissions. To offset generally means to pay someone else to compensate for the greenhouse gas emissions you cause.

Most carbon offset schemes aim to account for the emissions from a particular

activity such as plane flights or car travel. If every Australian offset all their car, plane and household electricity emissions it would reduce Australia's emissions by 16 per cent.

Planting trees is one way to offset emissions. Another is for the money to be put into electricity sources that do not generate greenhouse pollution. Many offset products involve planting trees that convert carbon dioxide to carbon and store it in their wood.

This is a cure for emissions that have already been released. ACF believes storage of CO<sub>2</sub> is not as good as preventing it in the first place. Offsets that go into renewable energy or energy efficiency are more permanent and therefore a preferable option.

In Australia, it costs more to generate renewable electricity than it does to generate coal-fired power. Some carbon offset programs charge you the difference in cost between coal-fired electricity and renewable electricity and invest the money in renewable energy projects.

Buying renewable energy stops green-

house pollution before it's even created, rather than trying to get it out of the atmosphere later.

In Australia, renewable energy is currently only available for electricity.

However, offsetting your carbon emissions does not necessarily mean you are now carbon neutral. Driving, flying and using electricity has environmental impacts other than climate change.

According to the CSIRO, air pollution kills around 2400 people in Australia each year. Up to a third of land in our cities is dedicated to cars. Noise and air pollution from flights is a growing problem.

Reducing your own emissions will always be better than paying someone else to offset them.

Encourage your friends to go carbon neutral and as suggest your business or workplace goes carbon neutral.

For more information visit  
[www.acfonline.org.au/greenhome](http://www.acfonline.org.au/greenhome) »



## Changing ways

### case study:

Maria Capriulo from Burnside

#### Why did you decide to go carbon neutral?

Through choices we make in our everyday living, I always felt this has contributed significantly to having a negative impact on our environment, from the destruction of rainforests through to personal energy wastage. I simply wanted to play a part (albeit a minute part) in helping to reduce the damage caused by greenhouse gas emissions, now clearly obvious from the climatic changes world-wide.

#### How have you reduced the carbon emissions that you are personally responsible for?

Many things we've done in the past have been taken for granted without realising their net effects. Today we use energy saving lights, we have improved our home insulation, in addition to using a rainwater tank our water is recycled, we walk whenever we can, environmentally friendly products are used in our home and we purchase local food as much as possible to reduce the impact of emissions caused through transport. We're also presently "reinventing" our garden by using plants that are more drought tolerant.

#### What is being done to offset the rest?

Several years ago we bought a couple of hectares of newly planted seedlings but felt we could do more. Today we are in the process of purchasing Green energy and have taken the opportunity to purchase carbon credits to help us remove our carbon footprint.

#### Is there any advice for others thinking about carbon offsetting?

Anything we buy or use, has been created by some industrial process that is associated with carbon emissions. To make one small change in our lifestyle is a very small price to pay in return for the preservation of our planet. »



Maria Capriulo, of Burnside has purchased carbon credits to erase her carbon footprint.

## OFFSET COMPANIES

**Carbon Planet** - This company is Adelaide-based but will offset your emissions with trees planted in NSW. Visit [www.carbonplanet.com](http://www.carbonplanet.com)

**The Canopy Project** - Offset your emissions with biodiverse tree plantings by Greening Australia. Visit [www.canopy.org.au](http://www.canopy.org.au)

**Carbon Neutral** - A not-for-profit body based in WA but affiliated with Trees for Life SA. Visit [www.carbonneutral.com.au](http://www.carbonneutral.com.au) »