

4.9 Taking action

Climate change is here. Statistics show that energy use is the leading cause of global warming. At the **G8** summit in 2008, world leaders reaffirmed that the globe was warming as a result of human activity and that the time to take action to reverse the trend was now. The challenge is turning the commitment that is expressed at such forums into action. Everyone can play a part in helping this to happen: not just the world leaders, governments, politicians and businesses, but also individuals, including you.

The Kyoto Protocol

In 1997 representatives of 160 countries met in Japan to consider ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Targets were to be set. Some demands were for a 15 per cent reduction by 2012, while some scientists argued for a 60 per cent reduction over the next century. Some countries, including China, claimed exemption from any targets because of their growing industrial development. Eventually a modest goal was set of a 5 per cent reduction from 1990 levels in six key greenhouse gases by 2012.

Initially, the Australian Government was reluctant to accept these targets, arguing that they would have a negative impact on the Australian economy because of our high dependence on fossil fuels to

produce the energy needed to power our industries.

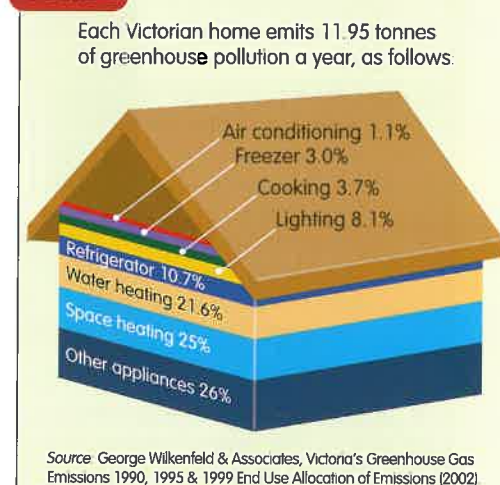
The Kyoto Protocol was finally **ratified** by the Australian Government in December 2007 and came into effect in March 2008. In ratifying the agreement, Australia has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent of 2000 levels by 2050. Australia will also be an active participant in working towards a post-2012 agreement.

In July 2005 Australia, together with the United States, Japan, China, India and South Korea, entered into the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. This partnership has set no specific goals for greenhouse gas reduction, but has pledged to work cooperatively to develop advanced technologies designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

A long journey begins with the first step . . .

Everyone is responsible to some degree for the production of greenhouse gas emissions. We ride in cars and use different forms of public transport. Many of our homes have air-conditioners, and we all own many plastic items. We dispose of rubbish that breaks down in landfill, emitting greenhouse gases such

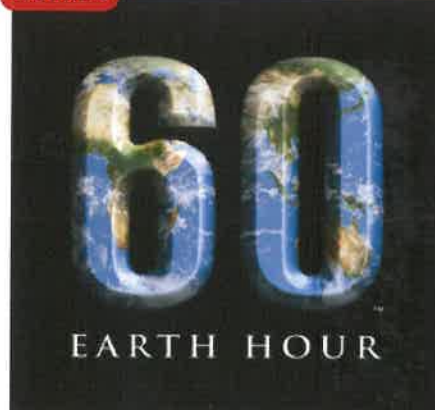
FIGURE 2



as methane. We have become accustomed to a standard of living that demands certain conveniences and facilities, many of which require forest clearance and the generation of pollution of all types. Yet everyone who contributes in any way to the problem of greenhouse gas production is also in a position to have some influence over the extent to which they do this.

In 2007, 2.2 million homes and businesses in Sydney switched off their lights for one hour, as part of Earth Hour. In 2008 the concept was taken around the world, and 50 million people switched off their lights.

FIGURE 3



Melburnians opt to stay switched on

Some Melburnians switched off but, compared with last year, more just tuned out during Earth Hour.

Electricity consumption in the city centre fell by 2 per cent from 8.30 pm on Saturday, when people were encouraged to switch off their lights in a united call for political leadership on climate change.

This was down markedly on a year ago, when electricity use for the hour plunged 10.1 per cent.

Across Victoria, the support was more consistent. Consumption fell 3 per cent, roughly the same as last year, according to the National Electricity Market Management Company. . .

What started two years ago as a Sydney-only affair was this year marked in nearly 4000 cities across 88 countries.

A string of prominent global landmarks were blacked out, including the Egyptian pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, the Vatican and parts of glitzy Las Vegas.

WWF Australia chief executive Greg Bourne said . . . the energy reduction for the one hour is unimportant. 'It is what we do for the remaining 365 days a year which is more important.'

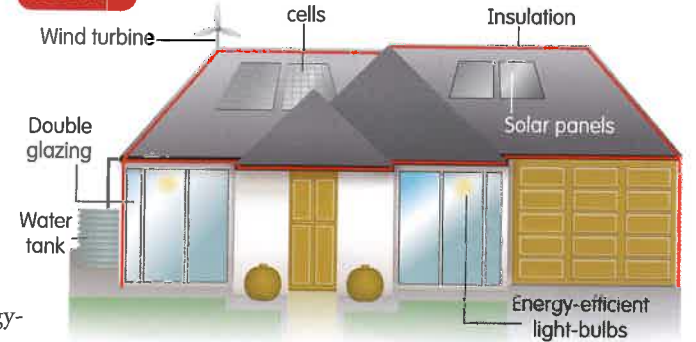
Source: Adam Morton, *The Age*, 30 March 2009

carbon footprint the effect your actions and lifestyle have on the environment in terms of CO₂ emissions

G8 'Group of 8', comprising the world's eight leading industrialised countries: the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Russia, Japan

ratified agreed to or confirmed

FIGURE 4



Activities

REMEMBER

- 1 What were the key outcomes of the Kyoto Protocol?
- 2 What reasons did Australia give for not signing the Kyoto Protocol?

THINK

- 3 Do you think any concerted world efforts to deal with a problem such as excessive greenhouse gas emissions can work if all parties are not committed to its outcomes? Give reasons for your views.
- 4 You will often see energy rating stickers, such as the one shown here, on goods such as fridges and stoves. Why do you think this is done? Do you think it is the best way to achieve this aim?
- 5 Cartoons often convey a hidden message or meaning. What message do you think is being conveyed by figure 1?

COMMUNICATE

- 6 Discuss in small groups to what extent you think economic goals and objectives are important with



respect to environmental goals such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Listen respectfully to one another's views. Decide, as a group, what policy direction you would push if you were in a position of influence in government, and present this view jointly to the class.

- 7 What might happen if every Australian household took steps to become energy efficient (figure 4) and participated in Earth Hour (see article above)? Discuss with a partner, using a mind map tool such as Inspiration to help you develop your thoughts.

SELF-DISCOVERY

- 8 Suggest a plan of action you might follow — and perhaps persuade your family to follow — over the next year to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions. Use the Australian Conservation Foundation weblink in your eBookPLUS and follow the Greenhome link for more ideas on saving energy.
- 9 Conduct a class debate on the topic: That Australia should have ratified the Kyoto Protocol much sooner.

DESIGN AND CREATIVITY

- 10 Working with a partner, use desktop publishing to prepare a brochure designed to educate upper primary school students about what they can do to reduce their **carbon footprint**.

Student worksheet
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