

# Our Family Eco-Challenge

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In 2007 we watched a programme on SBS television called Carbon Cops. Each week the Carbon Cops visited families, analysing their carbon usage and developing strategies for reduce their carbon footprint.



At this stage we had no real idea about this so called ‘climate change’ disaster or our carbon footprint for that matter. After some discussion, however, we realised that whether we take steps to reduce our carbon footprint for environmental reasons, or whether we reduce our consumption of electricity, water and consumable goods for budget reasons, or whether we do it from the point of view of old fashioned living principles, or a healthy lifestyle perspective the actions we take would be the same.

A clear example of this is the action of riding a bicycle. If your approach was reducing your carbon foot print you may choose not to drive your car to work, choosing instead to commute by bicycle. If you were very budget conscious you would ride your bike instead of driving in order to conserve fuel. If you had an old fashioned living approach you may ride your bicycle as your chosen form of transport, or if you were taking a healthy living approach you would choose to ride your bike to combine your workout with your commute to work. Whichever theme you live by, the action of riding your bike is the same.



We then realised that there are a whole list of actions that would have benefits across the whole spectrum of lifestyle themes. Growing a garden, for example, would be environmentally positive, save us money, enable healthier eating and bring a sense of nostalgia to our weekend activities.



After considering all the benefits, we called a family meeting and brainstormed a list of positive changes that we could make. We called it our 'eco challenge' because it was language that is easy for our children to understand and it was also a theme that was very prevalent at school at the time.

Here is the list of positive changes that we came up with.

### Energy

- a) Turn off lights when not in use
- b) turn off appliances at the wall
- c) Have shorter showers
- d) install energy efficient light bulbs
- e) use re-chargeable batteries

### Water

- a) shorter showers and water saving showerheads
- b) catch cold water when waiting for hot to come through – use this to fill water bottle and kettle
- c) wash up in the small sink
- d) flush when necessary
- e) install water tanks

## Transport

- a) Ride bikes to school and work
- b) Limit trips to town – by planning and grouping trips
- c) Get Dad to ride motorbike to town for smaller items/ errands
- d) Walk
- e) Find cheaper fuel, drive more economically

## Garbage

- a) Compost Food Scraps
- b) Stop Getting Plastic Bags
- c) Buy items with less packaging

## Consumption

- a) Don't buy unnecessary things
- b) Work on a cash budget
- c) Use things sparingly
- d) Do instead of buy – make it yourself.

