

# RESILIENCE IN ACTION

Tips and tricks for a bushfire-smart community



## Climate Change Impacts Bushfire Danger

by Jane Sultana, Moe South resident

In Gippsland we are already feeling the effects of climate change and we're running out of time to turn things around. Our land is becoming hotter and drier, escalating bushfire risk.

On April 15th, the Climate Council of Australia released a sobering new report: Aim High, Go Fast: Why Emissions Need To Plummet This Decade. To read the report search: [bit.ly/AimHighReport](https://bit.ly/AimHighReport)

The report finds there is little time to avert the most dangerous climate change scenarios. **Unless we act rapidly to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fire risk will only get worse.** Shockingly, Australia has one of the largest carbon footprints per person anywhere in the world.

Now is the time to commit to some resolutions that will help to reduce emissions and positively change the conversation around climate change.

1. Take the time to read climate news articles from reliable sources (ABC, Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Renew Economy, Climate Council of Australia).
2. Commit to having more conversations about climate change with your nearest and dearest. People are more likely to take information on board if it comes from a family member or friend.
3. Make your home more energy efficient.
4. Shift how you consume to reduce your impact on the environment.
5. Send an email to our local MPs Harriet Shing (State member for Eastern Victoria) and Russell Broadbent (Federal member for Monash) calling on them to do more to tackle the climate crisis.

### HOW DOES CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECT BUSHFIRES?



#### A LONGER FIRE SEASON

Hotter conditions mean a longer fire season, leading to more dangerous bushfires and leaving less time for hazard reduction.

#### HOTTER TEMPERATURES

Australia is getting hotter, with more extreme hot days and longer, hotter heatwaves. These conditions are increasing the risk of bushfires in many areas.

#### DRIER VEGETATION & 'FUEL'

Hotter conditions and periods of low rainfall dry out soil and vegetation, increasing fire risk.

#### MORE LIGHTNING

A warmer climate increases the chance of lightning, which is a key factor in starting fires.



## Moe South Households Slash their Carbon Footprint

Profiled in this edition of *Resilience in Action*, are three Moe South families who are acting on the home front to lower their carbon footprint by:

- reducing their waste
- reducing their energy use and reliance on fossil fuels
- off-setting their carbon emissions.

## HOUSEHOLD ONE: The Schloetel Family

### **Did you know?**

A staggering 3.75 million disposable nappies are used each day in Australia and New Zealand and it takes about one cup of crude oil to make each nappy. This is a lot of waste going to landfill. Disposable nappies take hundreds of years to break down.



***The Schlötel family keep their house warm in winter by closing the drapes.***



### **Waste reduction:**

We buy in bulk to save on packaging and refill our bottles of washing detergent and hair shampoo.

The children take their lunches to school in reusable containers. We find beeswax wraps to be an excellent reusable alternative to plastic film and zip lock bags. We use handkerchiefs in preference to tissues and cloth nappies instead of disposable.

Wherever possible we say no to plastic bags. Buying our bread directly from the bakery and taking our own fabric bread bags helps.

Instead of buying bottled drinks we make our own soda water.

Clothes are handed down from one child to the next instead of always buying new.

Simple toys are often the best. The children love making cubbies out of cardboard boxes and unique artwork from scraps.

### **Reducing our energy use and reliance on fossil fuels:**

When purchasing new appliances we always check the energy star rating labels which provide information on energy efficiency. Recently we purchased a dishwasher. It was a bit costly but significantly more energy and water efficient than other similar machines.

Whenever possible we dry our washing outdoors on a clothes line because clothes dryers guzzle up energy.

On cold winter nights we close our thick drapes to reduce heat loss through glass doors and windows. By trapping the heat inside we use less energy to keep our house snug and warm. During the summer months the drapes help to keep unwanted heat out.



### **Carbon offset:**

We love living out in the bush and caring for the native trees on our block.

There are steep slopes behind our house and we are currently doing research to find out which native species would be best to stabilise and revegetate them with.

### ***Did you know?***

Any soft plastic that can be scrunched into a ball in your hand can be recycled through the REDcycle program. Simply gather together all your scrunchables and drop them into a collection bin at participating supermarkets.

Your plastic will be turned into indoor and outdoor furniture, bollards and signage, garden edging and even fence posts.



***The Sultana family are proud of the Tesla in their garage.***



### **Waste reduction:**

We take our own net bags when purchasing fruit and vegetables and select food items with less or no packaging.

We drink tap water in preference to bottled water or juice.

We recycle packaging including all scrunchable plastic bags (bread, rice and pasta bags etc.) which we take down to the Coles plastic bag recycling bin.

We take small used batteries to the Moe Library battery buckets for recycling.

We compost our food scraps and use the compost on our vegetable garden.

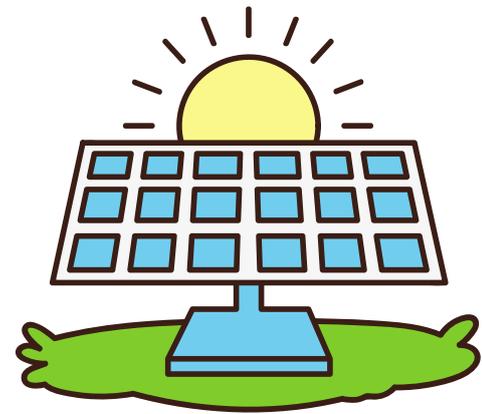
### **Reducing our energy use and reliance on fossil fuels:**

During the building process we incorporated many energy efficient features into the design of our home. These features include verandas for summer shade, north facing windows to let in the winter sun, double brick walls with insulated cavities and double glazed windows.

In winter we wear warm clothing and leave the gas heating on a low setting.

Taking short showers helps reduce our gas use too since our solar hot water service is gas boosted.

In September of 2020 we fitted our home with solar electricity. We have solar panels capable of generating 6.2kW on our north facing roof and a Tesla Powerwall in our garage. The Tesla battery holds 13.8kWh. Since September 2020 we have only had to draw electricity from the grid a few times and that has been on very overcast days.



### **Carbon offset:**

We have revegetated our half acre block with hundreds of native plants including bottlebrushes, hakeas, grevilleas, eucalypts, wattles, banksias and melaleucas.

The shrubs and trees we have chosen provide food and habitat for native fauna as well as acting as a carbon sink. Wherever possible, we put the plant trimmings back on the garden (we have our own mulcher) which helps the soil to retain nutrients and moisture.

We are avid bird watchers and have spotted over 40 different species of native bird feeding and nesting in our garden.

Participating in community tree planting events such as National Tree Day (Sunday 1st August, 2021) also helps to offset our emissions.



## HOUSEHOLD THREE: Luke Van Der Meulen and Jenny Jackeulen

### *Did you know?*

You can take left over household paint to the Moe Transfer Station at no cost. From here it will be collected by Paintback, an independent, not for profit company specialising in the recycling of leftover paint and paint tins.



***Jenny and Luke drink tank water instead of buying bottled water.***

### **Reducing our energy use and reliance on fossil fuels:**

We have retrofitted our older house with many energy saving features. These include extra insulation in the ceiling, fitting a slow combustion wood heater after lining the exterior with fire wool which then redirects more heat back into the house, and have double glazed a number of external windows and doors.

We have led lights throughout the house and use corner lamps most of the time which deliver enough lighting as well as providing a warm and cosy environment. Energy efficient external lights are on timers so they are movement activated only.

We only use our dishwasher once a day and wait until it is full before switching it on. This saves water and improves its energy efficiency.

In the laundry we use shorter wash load settings on lower temperatures as often as possible.

To ensure that our solar electricity is working as efficiently as possible we get the solar panels professionally cleaned annually.

Window coverings internally and externally help with temperature control. In summer we keep the outside awnings down, internal curtains closed, and doors to rooms not being used closed, to keep the house cool inside. The use of door 'snakes' helps stop heat/cooling leaking out from under doors. Ceiling fans help to provide a refreshing airflow and move the warm/cool air throughout the house.

Early in the mornings and late in the evenings we find opening doors both sides of the house help with cooling through cross ventilation. On hot days we choose quiet, non- strenuous activities. As a result, it is very rare that we feel the need to switch the air conditioning on.



### **Waste reduction:**

We have twelve chooks who eat a large proportion of our food scraps. The chook manure is used to fertilise our garden. The extra unforeseen bonus is not just seeing everything thriving, bursting really, but seeing how many bees, including native bees, come to appreciate our plants. Then there's the large array of birds we get to see also enjoying the nectar and pollen from the plants.

The eggs laid by the chickens provide our family, friends and neighbours with an abundant supply of fresh, flavoursome eggs. We grow some of our own fruit, nuts and vegetables making us less reliant on purchasing produce that has been grown many kilometres away.

When cleaning domestically and personally, we use alternative products such as bicarbonate of soda and eco-friendly, readily available, commercial products that are also packaged in reusable containers that have been made out of recycled plastic.

When shopping we avoid using single use plastic bags provided instore, (esp. in the fruit and veg areas), and bring our own reusable shopping bags to pack our purchases at the register. On the rare occasions we forget to bring our bags, it has never been a problem to wheel a shopping trolley to the car and pack items directly into the car.

Carrying a reusable bag, (bag on a key ring type), which can be put into a pocket or handbag when not in use, is also practiced.

Our tank water is lovely to drink so no need for us to buy water.

We strongly believe in reusing and repurposing. One example of this is the flooring in our shed which is made from thick, rubber conveyer belts from the old Yallourn mine. No need to lay concrete.

We often wash out glass jars and pass them on to family and friends who then fill them up with home produce they have created. They then either pass them on or sell these products at market to raise money for various charities they are involved in.

We also collect bread tags as well as bottle caps, (which have the recycled symbol inside the lid containing the numbers 4 and 2 in that symbol), and pass them on so that they can be made into wheel chairs and prosthetics for people in third world countries.

We recycle old domestic batteries from, toys, torches etc, to make sure they are properly disposed of and not put into land fill.

Indoor house mats are from Choices Flooring in Moe who turn remnant carpet scraps into mats of varying sizes and sell them for a small cost.

### **Carbon offset:**

We consider ourselves to be custodians of the land with a responsibility to protect nature for future generations.

We work hard to be bushfire prepared, having a well-defined cleared area around our house. However, much of our 3.5 hectares is revegetated farmland. The native bushland on our property was mostly planted by the previous owner from 1970. We have continued on with the revegetation, planting 100's more native trees and shrubs after moving into the property in 2000.