

## 5 ways you can help with climate change

### Individual action really does matter – here's why and what to do about it

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When it comes to climate change the lifestyle choices we make really do matter. Using less energy and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels is critical to New Zealand meeting our commitments under the Paris Agreement. We all have to pull our weight, together, for this to work.



Of course, government and businesses must show leadership for New Zealand to reach the scale of emissions reductions we need, but individuals also have an important role to play in looking after our environment.

It may seem like making one small change in your life won't achieve anything, but small steps can become big leaps before you know it.

One minute you're changing out your lightbulbs to LEDs, and six months later that behaviour becomes second nature. You find yourself open to new, bigger changes like switching up your car for the bus when getting to work. People also find that these new routines can have a positive impact on bank balances, stress levels and health.

And when actions are multiplied across a community, the impact is multiplied too. Did you know it was only back in 2019 when single-use plastic bags were banned? There was huge public support for the move, enabling the government to take action. Now it's second-nature to take reusable bags to the supermarket and we've saved three billion plastic bags from entering circulation.

So what can you do next? A good place to start is calculating your carbon footprint, and this is not as complicated as it sounds. The online tool is useful for understanding your personal impact on the planet and where you could make some changes, and it's really easy to use.

Once you've got that sorted, here are five simple ideas for living more with less.

Major reductions in transport emissions are critical to meeting New Zealand's overall net zero target by 2050, so it's time to leave the car at home and walk, bike, use public transport or car share as much as you can.

Transport makes up a fifth of New Zealand's emissions and one-third of car trips are under 2km. Ditching two of these short car trips a week could save 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year, which is roughly the average amount of carbon dioxide stored annually in 4800 hectares of pine trees. There's no prizes for guessing that making the switch to an electric or hybrid vehicle is kinder on the planet, did you know it can also be kinder on your wallet too when you start looking at your longer term expenses?

The lifetime cost of EV ownership can be cheaper than running a petrol car, especially with rising fuel costs. Use the Vehicle Total Cost of Ownership tool and see for yourself:

Our homes represent 7% of New Zealand's energy-related emissions, and our energy use rises as quickly as the temperature drops in winter as we all reach for the heaters and electric blankets. The key here is to be efficient with your energy use – not only is it better environmentally but you will save actual money too, with your power bill down.

Ways to save power include: installing insulation; switching to LED lighting; switching off appliances when not in use; where practical, using power in off-peak times; and using energy efficient appliances and products. When buying appliances, make sure you consider their energy efficiency star rating – you want to go for at least three stars. And the one appliance that will make the biggest difference – to your energy use, to your power bill and your comfort over winter – is your heater. Installing an efficient heat pump is the best thing you can do to reduce household emissions.

The fashion industry produces 10% of annual global carbon emissions according to the World Bank, so think twice before hitting 'add to cart'. Try to avoid fast fashion, and where possible choose quality garments that will last a lifetime.

How a product is made and how it gets to you are all factors in its carbon footprint. Products made locally and out of natural or recycled materials are best.

Another question to ask yourself is, "Do I really need it?" In general, the less you buy, the fewer emissions. Consider if you could rent or borrow a product before you buy it. Or could you buy it second-hand? Sharing big items with friends, family or neighbours is another great way to keep your carbon footprint, and costs, down.

You can also use the power of your dollar, and your voice, to support eco-friendly businesses.

With grocery bills steadily on the rise, this is another area where what's good for the climate is also good for your wallet.

New Zealanders throw away over 75,000 tonnes of food each year – that's 32kg each – worth \$560 per household. It wastes the carbon used to produce it and creates potent greenhouse gas if it rots in landfill. The most climate positive changes you can make to your diet are to only buy what you need, and to introduce more meat-free meals into your week.

Emissions from the typical Kiwi diet could drop by 7% if we went meat-free for one meal a week while still meeting an adult's dietary needs.