



*Creating Environmentally Sustainable Communities  
through a Middle Way of Life - A Workbook*



Buddhist Council of NSW  
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*"We have a brief window of opportunity to take action, to preserve humanity from imminent disaster and to assist the survival of the many diverse and beautiful forms of life on Earth.*

*Future generations, and the other species that share the biosphere with us, have no voice to ask for our compassion, wisdom, and leadership. We must listen to their silence. We must be their voice, too, and act on their behalf."*

*From "A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change" [1]*



*Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."*

*Prof Ian Lowe: "It would be much easier to ignore these difficult issues, to enjoy our material comforts and our wonderful lifestyle - but sustainable future is clearly a better future. Working for it is our moral duty to the countless millions of other species that we share this planet with, and the future generations for whom we hold it in trusts."*

*Dalai Lama: "It is our collective and individual responsibility to preserve and tend to the environment in which we all live."*

*St Francis of Assisi: "It is no use walking anywhere to preach, unless our walking is our preaching."*

*M.K. Gandhi: "Whatever you do may seem insignificant but it is most important that you do it."*

*Thomas Berry: "The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong." [2]*



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## INTRODUCTION

It is an unavoidable truth that we are living during a global environmental crisis of which large-scale pollution, global warming, poverty of many millions of people and extinction of many species are clear signs. While the deep causes of this crisis are indeed human selfishness and ignorance of the natural laws of cause and effect, it is vital, like during any medical or humanitarian crisis, that we deal with the immediate dangers first and then focus on alleviating the deeper causes, and establishing a preventive or environmentally sustainable lifestyle. [3]

Just as ethical rules of conduct, so simplifying and purifying our basic life requisites is essential to establishing an environmentally sustainable way of life - a Middle Way between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-injury. This way of life was taught by the Buddha 2500 years ago, but unlike then our basic life requisites are not naturally pure and environmentally sustainable, so we now need to address these much more than it was necessary then. To achieve an environmentally sustainable lifestyle does not require much time or money, but a general understanding of what a modern sustainable lifestyle means, a standard to measure our lifestyle by and an effective method to achieve such lifestyle.

This workbook has been designed to help you establish an environmentally sustainable lifestyle that is relevant to the modern world now, and so contribute towards achieving national and international CO<sub>2</sub> emission targets and environmental sustainability. The workbook is suitable for both individuals and community groups, to systematically examine and improve their personal and community lifestyle. It utilises free online eco-footprint calculators and other sustainable lifestyle resources. Measuring your eco-footprint will enable you to evaluate your lifestyle against your current national average and against the current globally sustainable lifestyle. It will also give you some insight into what you need to improve. The following worksheets will help you develop a general understanding of what an environmentally sustainable lifestyle means, examine your way of life, plan improvements and take action. Finally, the contemplation on the impacts of our lifestyle on the environment, described at the end of this workbook, will help you develop a holistic understanding of the global interdependence and hence of the significance of each individual's way of life in alleviating the environmental crisis.

*Dr Danuse Murty  
Sydney 2012*

## ECO-FOOTPRINT RECORDS



DATE	CALCULATOR	VALUE	NOTES
	My Footprint		
	EPA		
	My Footprint		
	EPA		
	My Footprint		
	EPA		

### Eco-footprint calculators:

My Footprint - [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org)

EPA Ecological Footprint Calculators - [www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint)

*“The small things you do now make a big difference. Your everyday actions at home, work and play will reward both the environment and you. Live in a sustainable way and feel good about your contribution. Check your current behaviours - see how many of the priority actions you already do and then take the next step.” (Our Environment - It’s a Living Thing) [4]*

# 1: ECO-FOOTPRINT AND FIRST STEPS

1. Open the 'Living Thing' website [4], and read the 'What you Can Do' web-page.
2. Measure your ecological footprint, using My Footprint and EPA online eco-calculators (web-links are on page 4). Record your outcomes in the Eco-footprint table on page 4
3. Read the list of some top energy, water and waste reducing things you can do. List 5 other things you consider very important. In both lists tick those things you are already doing.

## SOME VERY IMPORTANT ECO- FRIENDLY ACTIONS

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- Use solar energy for lighting and hot water.
- Install energy efficient compact fluorescent lamps, and switch off lights, appliances and equipment when not in use.
- Manage home heating and cooling by insulating, draft-sealing and shading, and setting thermostats appropriately.
- Reduce water usage by using water efficient showerheads and toilet flushing system.
- Walk, use bicycle or public transport instead of a car where possible.
- Eat less meat and processed food, and eat more fresh fruit, vegetables, wholemeal cereals and legumes. Compost food scraps at home or through your local council waste collection scheme.
- Minimise waste of packaging and other materials - reduce, reuse and recycle.

## OTHER IMPORTANT ACTIONS

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## 2: HOME - ENERGY AND WATER

1. Open the 'Save at Home' section of the 'Living Thing' website [4] and read the 'Energy Smart' and 'Water' web-pages. Use the menu on the left of those pages to obtain more information.
2. Complete the lists of very important energy and water conservation actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

### ENERGY CONSERVATION ACTIONS

**DATE  
STARTED**

1. Use solar energy for light and hot water where you can.
2. Install energy efficient lighting such as fluorescent bulbs.
3. Switch off lights, appliances and equipment when not in use.
4. Manage home heating and cooling by insulating, draft-sealing and shading, and setting thermostats appropriately.
5. Wash clothes in cold water and dry them outside in the open air.
6. Use low energy consumption cooking methods.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### WATER CONSERVATION ACTIONS

**DATE  
STARTED**

1. Use rainwater for your garden and for washing your car.
2. Install water efficient showerheads and dual-flush toilet system.
3. Operate your washing machine or dishwasher only when you have full load.
4. Take shorter showers.
5. Turn off water taps when not in use.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### 3: HOME - WASTE AND RECYCLING

1. Open the 'Save at Home' section of the 'Living Thing' website' [4], and read the web-pages 'Waste' and 'Recycling'. Use the menu on the left of those pages to obtain more information.
2. Complete the list of very important waste reduction actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

<b>WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING ACTIONS</b>	<b>DATE STARTED</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Give your unwanted items to a charity and repair your clothing and broken appliances where possible.</li><li>2. Avoid use of disposable shopping bags and disposable food containers and cutlery.</li><li>3. Avoid products with excessive packaging.</li><li>4. Recycle paper, plastic, glass and metal.</li><li>5. Use recycled paper products.</li><li>6. Compost food scraps.</li><li>7.</li><li>8.</li><li>9.</li><li>10.</li></ol>	



*"Shop wisely. Buy what you really need." (Our Environment - It's a Living Thing) [4]*

## 4: HOME - AIR AND CHEMICALS

1. Open the 'Save at Home' section of the 'Living Thing' website [4] and read the web-page 'Chemicals'. Use the menu on the left of that page to obtain more information.
2. Complete the list of very important chemicals reducing actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

### REDUCING USE OF HARMFUL CHEMICALS

DATE  
STARTED

1. Avoid cleaning products with artificial (synthetic) colours and fragrance. Choose natural plant-based products.
2. Use plant-based soap or low-chemical content and phosphate free detergents for washing dishes and clothing, and for general household cleaning.
3. Make your own general cleaning mixture using soap and other natural ingredients, such as vinegar, sodium bicarbonate and eucalyptus oil.
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- 5.
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- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

*"While we may consider that our home is our sanctuary the air we are breathing indoors is now more polluted than the air outside! In addition it has been estimated that 90% of our time is spent indoors inhaling a variety of pollutants known as VOCs (Volatile organic compounds), which are found in plastics, synthetics, paints, furnishings glues, cosmetics and solvents to name a few." (Safer Solutions) [5]*



## 5: GARDEN - PLANTS, PETS AND WILDLIFE

1. Open the 'Safer Solutions' website [5]. Read the web-page 'In Your Garden' to learn how you can make your garden more eco-sustainable.
2. Complete the list of very important garden care actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

### ECO-FRIEDLY GARDEN CARE

**DATE  
STARTED**

1. Avoid use of synthetic herbicides or pesticides. Use natural weed and pest control.
2. Remove noxious and environmental weeds from your garden.
3. Plant native plants to encourage native wildlife.
4. Put bells on your cats and keep them caged or indoors at night.
5. Join a bush-care or other wildlife conservation group.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

*"The average domestic cat brings home 16 mammals, 8 birds and 8 reptiles each year. There are more than 2.5 million domestic cats in Australia. Feral cats feed on wildlife. There are now more than 12 million feral cats across Australia, many of which were once someone's pet until they were forgotten or run away." (WIRES) [6]*

## 6: FOOD

1. Open the 'Save at Home' section of the 'Living Thing' website and read web-page 'Chemicals'. [4]  
Use the menu on the left of that page to learn more about how to make your food free of harmful chemicals. Open the Why Veg website learn why it is important to eat less of animal products. [7]

2. Complete the list of very important food choices.

3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.

4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

ECO-FRIENDLY FOOD CHOICES	DATE STARTED
1. Eat less meat and don't eat meat at least one day each week.	
2. Avoid factory-farmed animal products. Chose free range instead.	
3. Eat less processed food and more fresh fruit and vegetables, unrefined cereals and legumes.	
4. Eat more organic food.	
5.	
6.	
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10.	

*"Eating less meat is is one of the most effective things you can do to reduce your impact on the environment." (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change) [8]*



***Serving Food [9]***

*In this food  
I see clearly the presence  
of the entire universe  
supporting my existence.*

## 7: PERSONAL PRODUCTS - MEDICINES, TOILETRIES, CLOTHING

1. Open the 'Save at Home' section of the 'Living Thing' website' and read the web-page 'Chemicals'.  
[4] Use the menu on the left of that page to learn about chemicals in personal products.
2. Complete the list of very important personal care actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

<b>ECO-FRIENDLY PERSONAL CARE</b>	<b>DATE STARTED</b>
1. Avoid synthetic medicines where possible. Use natural medicines and treatments instead.	
2. Avoid soaps, shampoos, lotions and other toiletries that were tested on animals. Choose products labelled 'Not tested on animals' or 'Cruelty free'.	
3. Avoid artificially coloured and scented toiletries. Use only unscented or naturally scented soaps, shampoos and creams.	
4. Avoid coloured and perfumed toilet paper. Buy only plain paper and made from recycled paper.	
5. Avoid clothing made by child labour. Choose fair-trade clothing.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

*"Compassionate living: The humble act of shopping provides the single greatest opportunity to vote against animal cruelty." (Animals Australia) [10]*

## 8: EDUCATION AND WORK RESOURCES

1. Read the 'Waste' pages in the 'Save at Home' and 'Save at Work' sections of the 'Living Thing' website [4]. Use the menu on the left of those pages to learn more how to make your education and work more eco-sustainable.
2. Complete the lists of very important resource conservation actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

<b>EDUCATION &amp; WORK RESOURCES CONSERVATION</b>	<b>DATE STARTED</b>
1. Print only what is really necessary and on both sides of paper. 2. Reuse paper printed on one side for notes and drafts. 3. Borrow books and other resources from the libraries. 4. 5.	

## 9: TRANSPORT

1. Read the 'Transport' in the 'Save at Home' and 'Save at Work' sections of the 'Living Thing' website [4]. Use the menu on the left of those pages to learn more how to make your transport more eco-sustainable.
2. Complete the lists of very important eco-sustainable transport actions.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

<b>ECO-SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ACTIONS</b>	<b>DATE STARTED</b>
1. Walk or use bicycle where practically possible. . 2. Use public transport to go to place of learning or work. 3. Fly only if necessary. 4. 5.	

*"By using cars less we can improve our health, reduce air pollution and improve quality of life for the whole community." (Our Environment - It's a Living Thing) [4]*

## 10: HELPING OTHERS

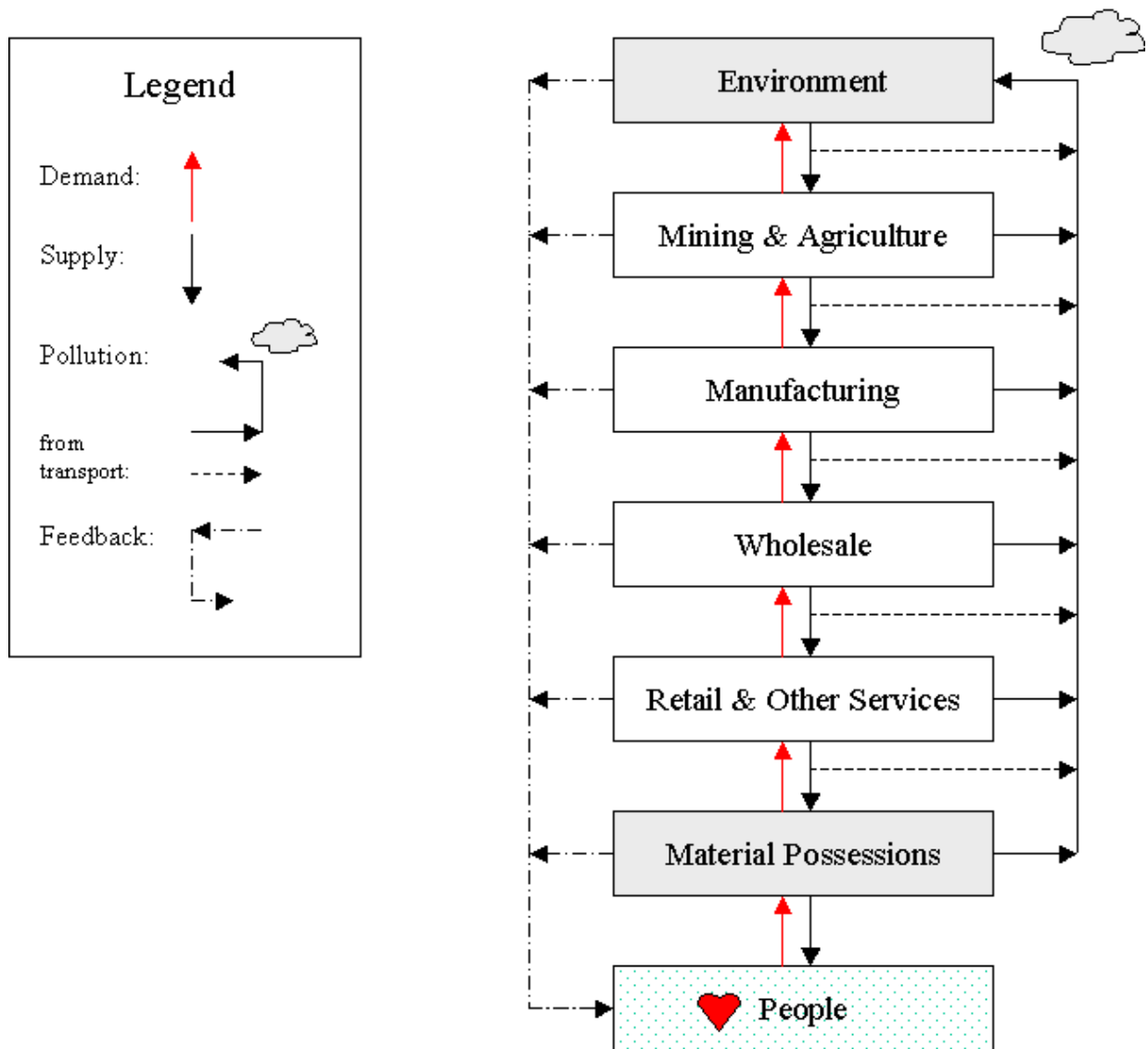
1. Reflect on simple ways to help others.
2. Complete the lists of some important ways to help others towards more eco-sustainable living.
3. For those things you are already doing - record the date (year) you started doing each.
4. For those things you can also do - record the date later when you started each.

<b>HELPING OTHERS – ECO-FRIENDLY ACTIONS</b>	<b>DATE STARTED</b>
1. Give only eco-friendly products for birthdays, Christmas and other special occasions.	
2. Give your presents unwrapped or wrapped in recyclable packaging.	
3. Give gifts to UNICEF, WWF or other charity on your friends' behalf.	
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5.	
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10.	

*“An important and easy way of helping our families, friends and work associates, is through offering them healthy food and other environmentally friendly gifts.” [3]*

# CONTEMPLATION ON OUR LIFESTYLE

To contemplate on the effects of our lifestyle on the environment and to understand the significance of the Middle Way of life in alleviating the environmental crisis, we can utilise a simple human ecosystem flowchart model, a model of global interdependence. [3]



This model consists of 7 components: people or human population, our material possessions, our 4 levels of industries, and finally our natural environment. The 4 levels of human industries are associated with 4 kinds of livelihoods and supply the basic life requisites. This ecosystem is propelled by the human desire for life and material possessions. Excessive desires lead to excessive demand for and accumulation of material things and to industrial production of these. The production and transport at each stage of the industrial process adds environmental pollution and the environment responds with warning signs, like physical fever and skin disease, indicating deeper causes within human society.

Since this ecosystem is driven by human desires and demand for material things, it is easy to see how very important the choice and moderation in all things is, not just for oneself but for the whole society and environment. We can also easily imagine how the environmental pollution would decline if all people adopted a Middle Way of life in food, clothing, home and other basic life requisites.

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