

Sustainability St - Where to, Now?

by Stuart Sexton

The Artarmon Sustainability Street Group has now been in existence for some five years. What have we achieved in that time? What are we going to do next? What do we need to progress from here?

The Sustainability Street Approach (SSA) is based on two key objectives: (1) to get along better with all other species, locally and globally, and (2) to get along better with each other, locally and globally. While we have held many workshops on sustainable household practices, seen water tanks and household solar power demonstrations, created the Sustainable Living Collection in Artarmon Library, and developed the Sustainable Garden outside the Library, perhaps it is time to reflect on how far we have progressed in achieving these two key objectives, and how we can continue to address them.

We are looking to our political leaders to establish some global guidelines for limiting emissions and controlling pollution, and the Copenhagen conference in December will be a watershed in climate management. Either we as global citizens will contribute to limiting climate change – or we will contribute to accelerating climate change! What message are we sending our politicians? I received questionnaires from my State and Federal members, and replied very emphatically that climate management is the major issue we face. Hopefully our parliamentarians will heed the messages we send.

But we cannot just sit back and wait for governments to tell us how to combat climate change; we need to do more ourselves. A study by Erica Van Schellebeck for Willoughby Council noted dramatic improvements in several sustainability measures from 2005 to 2008 by households who joined the Sustainability Street program, based on the NABERS rating system (National Australian Built Environment Rating System):

- Households with good to very good energy efficiency more than doubled;

- Households with good to very good water efficiency increased by more than 16%;
- Number of homes powered by 100% GreenPower tripled.

The statistics from this study indicated that each of the 40 Sustainability Street households saved some 187 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year. Although this is a small sample, it demonstrates what households can achieve for themselves – and the planet. Whether or not you believe that climate change is a threat to our lifestyle and even our survival, surely more efficient use of resources and minimising waste are commonsense goals for each of us. The SSA works, and the more people who actively participate, the closer we get to a sustainable future.

The study also asked participants to set objectives for themselves in improving resource management and waste control, and measure their progress from year to year. This is a key component of the SSA – to continually monitor and improve our household standards for energy, water use, and waste control.

Our group's major achievements over the last year or two are the establishment of the Sustainable Living Collection at the Artarmon Library, and the Sustainable Garden (soon to become a Community Garden) in front of the Library. The Tulloh Street Group has combined with us to get these going, but we need more volunteers, especially with the garden. Working bees on weekends three or four times a year and regular weekly watering need willing hands to help.

We need cooperation and encouragement from our neighbours and friends. We need more participants in our programs and projects. Above all, we need new ideas and new ways to improve our environment at the local level, where even one person can make a real contribution. Willoughby Council is most supportive of sustainability initiatives - for example, Council has power meters available for free



loan to check your household energy usage, provides compost bins at reasonable prices, and is jointly sponsoring the ClimateClever Shop (see <http://www.climateclevershop.com.au/>) with nearby Councils. It is well worth checking Council's website regularly at <http://www.willoughby.nsw.gov.au/> for sustainability workshops and events. Share the work, share the joy and then share the produce.

Artarmon Sustainability Street's final message for this year is: PARTICIPATE! Join us at our **monthly meetings (last Thursday of each month at Artarmon Library at 7:30pm)**, or get together with your neighbours to start your own Sustainability Street Group. Council mandates six households as the minimum for a Sustainability Street group and we are currently right on the minimum number. Help us out, and help yourselves! We need you to help our group keep up to date with sustainability issues that concern you and your family.

Please contact me at stuartsexton@gmail.com, or by phone on 0432 809 005, if you have an interest in joining with us to make a sustainable difference to yourself, your household, your street, and the world... If not, ask yourself why not? Whatever occupies us in our busy daily schedule, the environment and sustainability concerns will not go away no matter how we try to ignore them. So come and see us, browse the Sustainable Living Collection, and help out with the Community Garden.

SUSTAINABILITY ST.
IT'S A VILLAGE OUT THERE