



CHAPTER 10

IT'S OK, YOU'RE NOT ALONE!

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to a big difference that we often cannot foresee

- Marian Wright Edelman

You may know people who drive around town in big gas guzzling cars and constantly brag about their next trip overseas. Seeing and hearing these things may make you cringe, feel disheartened and want to give up. But please don't. There are a growing number of people and groups who are trading in their big cars for smaller, fuel efficient vehicles and changing their behaviours to help the environment.



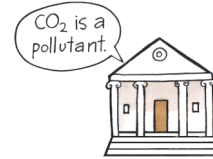
Evangelical Christian leaders are one example. Over 85 evangelical leaders including Presidents of evangelical colleges, leaders of aid groups and churches have backed a major initiative, The Evangelical Climate Initiative (www.christiansandclimate.org), to fight global warming. The Statement of the Evangelical Call to Action declares 'Christians must care about climate change because they love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God's world, and any damage that we do to God's world is an offence against God Himself (Gen. 1; Ps. 24; Col. 1:16)'. There is also a biblically inspired environment movement called 'creation care', which is based on the idea that Christians have an obligation as described in the Book of Genesis to 'replenish the earth' as god's stewards.



Prominent religious leader, Pope Benedict XVI, is doing his bit for global warming. Last year he urged his

followers not to squander the world's resources and now he is installing photovoltaic solar panels on the roof of the Paul VI auditorium in Vatican City. The solar panels will generate enough power to light, heat or cool the auditorium which sits 6,300 people. He is also considering installing solar panels on other buildings (with the exception of St Peter's Basilica and other historical landmarks).

The law can be a powerful and effective tool to bring about climate change protection. Over the last few years lawsuits have been brought against governments, fossil fuel industries and automotive manufacturers in an attempt to make them responsible for their contribution to the climate crisis. The state of California sued six car manufacturing firms (General Motors, Toyota, Ford, Honda,



Chrysler and Nissan) asking to be compensated for the damage the emissions have caused and are causing to

human health, the economy and environment. The state of California alleged emissions from the cars made by the six firms account for 30% of all of California's CO₂ and 9% of the world's total CO₂ emissions. This year the U.S. Supreme Court also ruled that CO₂ is a pollutant, and therefore can be regulated under the *Clean Air Act*.

Several lawsuits have also taken place in Australia. On the 7th November 2006, the Queensland Conservation Council lodged an objection to the proposed expansion of a coal mine by Xstrata Coal Qld Pty Ltd. The expansion would result in 28.5 million tonnes of coal being produced and 84 million tonnes of greenhouse gases would be released from mining, transporting and using the coal. It was argued that this amount of greenhouse gas

emissions would contribute significantly to global warming. Queensland Conservation Council wanted reasonable conditions imposed on the mine to mitigate the greenhouse gas emissions.

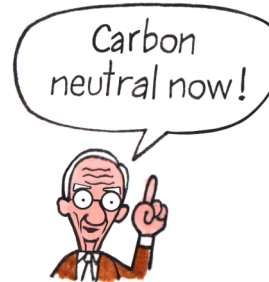
Unfortunately, the Queensland Land & Resource Tribunal who heard the case dismissed the objection and recommended that the mine be approved without placing any conditions on emissions.

Recently, Friends of the Earth (Canada) sued the Canadian Government for having abandoned its international commitment under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are presently 34% above their 6% reduction target set by Kyoto.



Grassroots action groups are being formed all over the world. Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots (www.rootsandshoots.org) and GetUp! (www.getup.org.au) are examples of organisations that

bring like-minded people together to work on projects that make a difference to local communities.



Rupert Murdoch (controlling shareholder, chairman and managing director of the largest media conglomerate, News Corporation) recently announced his

intention to be carbon neutral across all his businesses by 2100. Murdoch stated in his inspiring speech that the first step towards accomplishing this goal was to measure his carbon footprint (In 2006 Murdoch's empire had a carbon footprint of 641,150 tonnes). The second step is to switch to using renewable energy sources and the third step is to offset any greenhouse gas emissions (if necessary). Just imagine what would be possible if all the news organisations became carbon neutral? 'It will be the same as turning off all the electricity in the city of

London for five full days' said Murdoch. What would be possible if all corporations (not just news corporations) took on this challenge? Murdoch is quick to point out that by reducing his use of energy it also reduces his costs. It is a win-win situation.



Wal-mart (a business with more than 7,000 stores and 1.8 million employees) has pledged to install solar panels, conserve water and start using hybrid vehicles. It has also asked its 60,000 suppliers to make an effort to reduce packaging, waste and energy use. By 2020, Wal-mart is expected to save \$494 million a year by adopting energy efficient behaviours (i.e. using fuel efficient truck fleets and building stores that are more energy efficient).

Schools have begun to empower students to conserve energy and help others to do the same. At Mary E. Silveira School in San Rafael, California, a group of students (The energy team) conduct energy audits and write notes to teachers, reminding them to turn off their lights and computers when a class goes out for lunch. But it doesn't stop there. The school's energy team joined the Affordable Communities Energy Education program and spent 2003-2004 working with local senior citizens in a housing facility. School Principal Jeanne Casella said of the program 'The kids put up energy-reminder signs and doorknob bookmarks in English and Spanish, and helped the residents to replace traditional light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs and to take other simple actions. They saved the seniors about 5 percent on their energy bills while learning about energy efficiency themselves'. Not only did the seniors benefit from the experience, but so did the children. 5th grade member of the energy

team, Sara Lee, said 'We go around to the apartments checking that the lights are off and on, so that we can save them money on their energy bill. The money they save goes to the fun stuff they do'. Children feel great when they can help someone and make a difference at the same time.

We're at a turning point where more and more people, groups and corporations are catching onto the need to take action to leave behind a healthy planet for the next generation. No longer can we use the lame excuses 'No one else is doing anything, so why should I?' and 'It's going to cost too much' because they're simple not true. Each of us now has a moral and ethical duty to take action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, I'd like to leave you with the inspiring words of sustainability consultant, Ben Rose. His advice to us all regarding the climate challenge is as follows:

Start with something easily do-able like changing to natural power [green power], changing to compact fluorescent light bulbs and low flow shower heads (if you haven't already done so). Once you make the changes you'll find it'll give you more quality of life, not less. But be concerned, be fearful enough to keep making changes – keep your emissions trending down. Aim to halve your emissions in two years; use the greenhouse gas calculator (www.carbonneutral.com.au) to keep track of your emissions. Be afraid of the consequences of 'business as usual'; there's a lot at stake – the future of human civilisation. The only way we will get there is one by one, each changing our ways and encouraging each other.

We have a moment. Let's use this moment to make a difference.

