



## Climate Crisis

“Our climate crisis may at times appear to be happening slowly, but in fact it is happening very quickly – and has become a true *planetary emergency*.”

That was the message from Al Gore that I personally received whilst participating in Al Gore’s Climate Change Leadership Program, in Sydney recently.

The rate of change is becoming more and more evident in all parts of the world. The most well know changes are the rate at which many of the world’s glaciers are melting. The Himalayan Glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau feed seven Asian rivers that provide more than half of the drinking water to 40% of the world’s population. Within the next half-century those 40% of people may face serious water shortages (The Climate Project, 2006).

Closer to home Australia has experienced an average increase in temperatures of about 1°C since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This has led to an increase in heatwaves and a decrease in frosts and cold days, our night time temperatures are on average warmer than they use to be. Rainfall patterns are also changing with an increase in rainfall in the northwest over the last 50 years whilst eastern Australia and the southwest have experience a decline in rainfall (Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, 2006). With a further increase in temperatures of greater than 1°C the CSIRO projects that droughts in NSW will be 70% more frequent and widespread, with the average number of droughts per decade increasing from 3 to 4 by 2030 (The Climate Project, 2006). As the incidents of dry conditions increase, it becomes more difficult to classify the conditions as “drought”, rather it becomes the norm. Consider the profitability of your business, when your carrying capacity permanently drops to 60%-70% of your current maximums, and similarly when below average annual rainfall becomes the norm reducing your ability to crop.

Without doubt these changes are due to human activities. At no point in the last 650,000 years has the Earths Co<sub>2</sub> concentration gone above 300 parts per million

(we currently sit around 380ppm). Unless we make dramatic changes quickly it is predicted that within 45 years the Co<sub>2</sub> levels will reach 600ppm (The Climate Project, 2006). An increase in Co<sub>2</sub> means more of the sun's radiation is trapped within Earth's atmosphere which in turn heats up the planet (the Co<sub>2</sub> acts a bit like putting an extra doona on your bed). The hotter we get, the more extreme our weather will become, the more devastation will occur to all of Earth's integral systems and including all plants and animals, and the more vulnerable we become.

When thinking of global warming it is easy to be overwhelmed by the scale of the issue and therefore feel powerless. I would encourage you to keep in mind that global warming is a crisis created by the compounding effect of individual lifestyles and habits and therefore it is a crisis that can be solved by individuals changing their lifestyles and habits. The compounding effect of each individual taking responsibility and taking action will make a difference.

Some simple steps that everyone can do:

- Choose energy efficient lighting
- Insulate your house
- Reduce standby power waste
- Conserve hot water (better still install a solar hot water system)
- Switch to green power
- Reduce the number of miles you drive
- Use alternative fuels
- Consume less
- Buy things that last
- Buy local (to reduce food miles)
- Purchase offsets to neutralize your emissions
- Take political action

For more information on how you can make a difference visit the following websites:

[www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au) - The Australian Conservation Foundation site offers a green home challenge which will calculate for you your ecological footprint and then help you to make changes to neutralise your impact.

[www.climatecrisis.net](http://www.climatecrisis.net) - This site is Al Gores site that is full of information on global warming and advice on what you can do to reduce your impact.

We all live on the same planet and we all need to take action to stop this crisis.

*Written by Jane Appleby*

**References:**

Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology, 2006. Climate Change  
<<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/>> (Accessed: 8/12/06)

The Climate Project, Al Gore Climate Leader Course Manual, 2006