

The warming issue: a book in time

With the recent coincidence of the release of the Garnaut Review's draft report on climate change and independent market research indicating an alarming lack of public understanding about emissions trading, the appearance of *Climate Change: What You Can Do About It* by Paul Holper and Simon Torok is timely.

Holper and Torok are CSIRO science communicators who work side by side with some of the world's top climate change scientists – and it shows. Through numerous interviews and discussions with key researchers in the field, the authors provide a rare insight into how the scientific evidence for anthropogenic global warming has evolved over many years and through many disciplines, honed by the rigour

of peer review. Importantly, the focus is on Australia.

But making the science accessible to readers is not the only achievement of this book. It also offers a series of easy-to-apply, practical tips on how we can all reduce greenhouse gas emissions – at home, work and school.

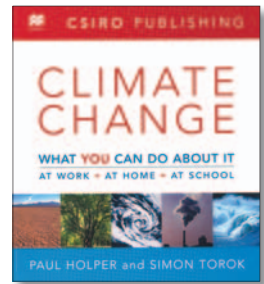
If you simply buy the book to find out what you, personally, can do about climate change, the rewards will be immediate. By the end of the first chapter, you will not only have a comprehensive checklist of what you can do around your home to minimise your carbon footprint, but you will have begun to understand some key aspects of the underpinning science.

The first chapter also includes a pie chart showing the

proportion of emissions from different domestic activities, which demonstrates where we can focus our efforts to get the most impact – for example, private car use, home heating and cooling, and water heating.

Subsequent chapters include easy-to-follow discussions about alternative energy sources; how to reduce emissions from shopping; saving energy at work and school; how to reduce emissions from transport; reducing emissions from cities; what 'dangerous' climate change is and how to avoid it; carbon sinks and offsets; large-scale engineering schemes; and the future costs of action and inaction.

The book is recommended to anyone looking for a well-researched, up-to-date reference on global warming and



Climate Change

What You Can Do About It

Paul Holper and Simon Torok

Pan Macmillan Sydney

2008, Paperback

ISBN: 9781405038782 – AU\$29.95

Available from Pan Macmillan

advice on reducing their carbon footprint. As the book's blurb says, 'Together, and informed, we can change the world'. This is an excellent place to start.

● Mary-Lou Considine

Visions of future cities

Australia is a highly urbanised country, with 95 per cent of us living in cities or towns. Unfortunately, we city folk live in a bubble when it comes to understanding our impact on the environment, so it's no surprise that urban dwellers continue to use natural resources and generate waste in a business-as-usual manner in the face of 21st century challenges such as climate change, drought, water shortages and environmental pollution.

Transitions: Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development in Australia brings together the ideas of 92 researchers in a 45-chapter treatise that identifies the challenges and highlights the solutions we will face in ensuring our cities make the transition from today's energy- and waste-intensive complexes

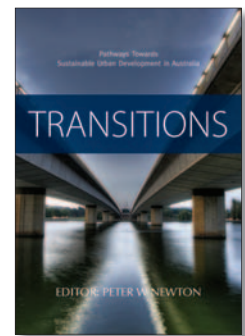
to more sustainable designs for high-density living.

As the book points out, despite Australian cities being rated among the world's most liveable, liveability does not equate to sustainability. It's sobering to discover that every Australian capital-city dweller has an average ecological footprint of 7 hectares, more than three times the global average. (If the world's population adopted a similar level of consumption to Australia's, three to four Earths would be required to support it!)

Surprisingly, London has been leading the way in sustainable urban planning. Two successive Lord Mayors have committed their administration to governing for carbon reduction, user-friendly transport and local, distributed, renewable energy systems. The former Lord Mayor established

the London Climate Change Agency, charged with reducing London's carbon dioxide emissions by 30 per cent by 2020. This is being achieved by imposing a pollution tax on cars, making cycling and public transport more accessible, providing incentives for carbon neutral properties and planning community-based renewable energy supplies feeding directly into buildings. As the book states, 'If London can do it, any city can.'

Transitions covers a lot of ground: global and local forces reshaping cities; climate change and sea-level rise; water and wastewater management; resource consumption and depletion; oil and biofuels; tourism; developing 'resilience'; floods, drought and high-temperature extremes; water and electricity supplies; biodiversity; biosecurity; community health and social issues; renewable and distributed energy systems;



Transitions

Pathways Towards Sustainable Urban Development in Australia

Peter W Newton (Ed.)

CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne (with Springer)

2008, Hardback

ISBN: 9780643094192 – AU\$195.00

Available in Australia and New Zealand from CSIRO Publishing, available elsewhere from Springer

energy efficient housing and subdivision design; transport; and ecoindustrial development. Everything a 21st century urban planner needs.

● Mary-Lou Considine