

How six women are changing the world

When Helen Henry returned after 10 years to her family's farm in the small country town of Hamilton, 300 km west of Melbourne, she was shocked at how dry the land had become. Flood plains had disappeared, including the wetland where, as a child, she had watched brolgas dance.

Concerned about the area's changing climate, Helen wrote to the local newspaper, putting out a call for other concerned locals to meet at a coffee shop. Since then more than 50 people have joined the 'Future Makers', a network of local people whose aim is to make Hamilton carbon-neutral and 'keep at our leaders to reduce the carbon footprint of this area'.

Helen Henry is one of six women profiled on video and in print for a new campaign recently launched by Oxfam called *Sisters on the Planet*. The six 'sisters' hail from the Carteret Islands, Bangladesh, Uganda, the UK, Brazil and Australia.

Sisters on the Planet forms part of Oxfam's wider 'Fight Climate Poverty' campaign. Its message is that while climate change will affect everyone, it

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Email us at ecos@csiro.au (with Sisters as the subject line) to subscribe to the ECOS online contents alert and automatically enter the draw for an Oxfam kit including *Sisters on the Planet* DVD, book and T-shirt. We have 5 to give away. Draw closes 31 May 2009.

will have an earlier, more disastrous impact on those in developing countries – and women there are already at a disadvantage.

For example, in many poor countries, women grow household crops, fetch fuel and water and bring up the children; it's up to them to find solutions when wells dry up or food crops fail.



In Bangladesh, Sahena Begum has been showing women in her community how to store clay ovens, fuel wood and seeds in high places to enable families to eat and grow food after floods. In Uganda, a local women's group has planted trees to provide fuel and food, and campaigned for a new village well.

Oxfam reminds us that with our country having one of the world's highest per capita rates of carbon emissions, Australians 'have a special responsibility to inform our communities and leaders' about the impacts of climate change.

'We are all in this together,' concludes the *Sisters* booklet. 'We can all become "sisters on the planet".'

Sisters on the Planet videos, booklets and action tips can be downloaded free from the Oxfam website (www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/climate-change/take-action/sisters-on-the-planet).

Climate change action in the blogosphere

The internet is one of the most effective networking tools for mobilising grassroots support around environmental issues, and climate change is no exception. Today you can log on to a growing number of Australian 'climate change action' websites and blogs.

According to Adrian Whitehead from Target300, there's a reason for this diversity of sites, and it's largely to do with each group's different approach to climate change targets and perceptions of urgency. Here are just a few examples:

Target300 (www.target300.org) advocates what many would regard as an extreme position: zero global emissions within a decade to bring atmospheric CO₂ levels down to 300 parts per million of global atmospheric carbon dioxide. This target is more ambitious than those being considered by governments around the world, but recently has been recommended by prominent scientists.

At the **Climate Movement** site (www.climatemovement.org.au) you can find a directory of all community climate

action groups in the country (by state and postcode); a central calendar of events; and a library of resources on climate science, solutions, campaigning and policy. The site is managed by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and, according to Whitehead, has more moderate targets than the two Victorian-based groups listed immediately below.

The **Climate Emergency Network** (www.climateemergencynetwork.org) was established last year in response to the book *Climate Code Red: The Case for Emergency Action* by David Spratt and Philip Sutton. Site features include an events guide, speaker bookings, speaker training, information resources (a PowerPoint presentation is available for download) and a discussion forum.

Beyond Zero Emissions (www.zeroemissionnetwork.org) describes itself as an 'independent alliance of [climate action] groups' with a focus on education, advocacy, campaigning and 'solution development'. Like Target300, this group advocates an immediate reduction



of greenhouse gases to achieve a zero emissions target within a decade.

CarbonEquity (www.carbonequity.info), established by David Spratt (*Climate Code Red* co-author), shows how groups and individuals can plan and monitor their own annual 'carbon rationing'.

Climate Action Network Australia (www.cana.net.au) is an alliance of 50 or so regional, state and national NGOs and other groups from Australia and overseas, including the Australian Conservation Foundation (whose website offers a downloadable guide to taking action on climate change: www.acfonline.org.au/uploads/res/res_communityclimatekit.pdf).