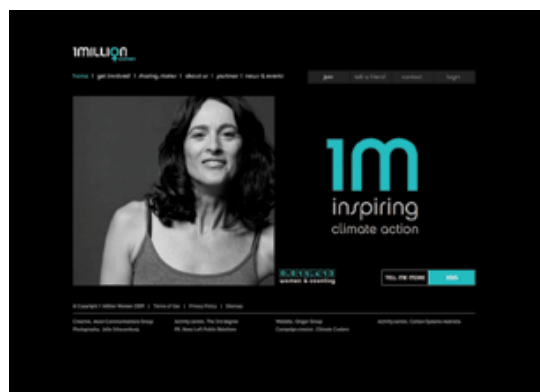


Campaign to trim Australia's CO₂ footprint by a million tonnes

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Most of the world's households are run by women, and in poor countries it is women who are most strongly feeling the impacts of global warming. Two Australian women have launched a campaign to inspire more women to take action on climate change.



1 Million Women – a campaign of daughters, mothers, sisters and grandmothers committed to taking practical action on climate change.

One in every eight women living in Australia is being targeted by the 1 Million Women campaign, which focuses on women taking practical action to reduce the impacts of climate change by reducing their personal carbon footprint.

Australian women make an estimated 70 per cent of purchasing decisions that affect a household's carbon footprint, and in the developing world women (and children) suffer disproportionately to men in climate-related natural disasters such as floods, storms, droughts and famines.

Launched in mid-2009, the campaign had signed up more than 14 000 women by the end of 2009, each of whom has pledged to reduce their individual carbon footprint by at least one tonne of carbon annually. Encouragingly, many of those women have committed to cuts of more than one tonne per year, with campaign organisers claiming that 90 000 tonnes had been committed by late 2009.

The campaign was founded by two women – businesswoman and mother of four, Natalie Isaacs, and her friend, 'Climate Coolers' creator and mother of five, Michelle Grosvenor – who say climate change is too important a challenge to leave up to politicians to resolve.

'I was doing nothing on climate change issues three years ago,' Natalie said. 'Then I got my head around the issue, took some action in my daily life. I took ownership of the problem and I realised that climate change is actually about everybody. Governments and business have a big role to play but so does the individual.'

From its inception, a core uniting theme of the 1 Million Women campaign has been the emerging evidence that climate change is a major gender issue as well as a global challenge for all humanity.

Opinion polling consistently shows that women in Australia are significantly more likely than men to support stronger

action on climate change. A Newspann published in *The Australian* newspaper in July 2009 reported that 64 per cent of women compared with 53 per cent of men were in favour of paying more for energy sources, such as petrol, electricity and gas, if it would help slow global warming.

But it is in poorer countries that women really need help in responding to climate impacts. The director of ActionAid Bangladesh, Farah Kabir recently said: 'Women are at the frontline of climate change because they have fewer means to be able to adapt and prepare for extreme weather conditions made worse by climate change.'

The gender dimension of climate change is becoming a more prominent issue internationally. Late last year, the 1 Million Women Campaign was selected by the European Climate Foundation to be profiled and highlighted for the Copenhagen conference – one of only six programs chosen from more than 300 civil society climate change initiatives from around the world.

The campaign, which engages and empowers women to cut carbon pollution in their daily lives – by making more conscious decisions about food purchasing and preparation, shopping, transport, travel and at work – aims to recruit one million women over the next two years.

'This would stop one million tonnes of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere, and would be equivalent to taking 250 000 cars off the road for 12 months – enough pollution to fill 2.1 billion wheelie bins or 20 billion balloons,' Natalie said.

The central hub for the campaign is its website (see link below) where each activity is linked to a quantitative reduction in CO₂, allowing women to select a range of appropriate activities that will contribute to the cumulative saving of one tonne or more of CO₂.

Campaign launches involving female political and business leaders have been held in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, with more events planned in early 2010 in other cities, concluding with a national forum in Canberra on 5 June, World Environment Day.

More information:

1 Million Women,
www.1millionwomen.com.au

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