



Take part in the Living Smart program and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions:

- Sign up to GreenPower
- Calculate your carbon footprint
- Offset the rest

## How buying “carbon offsets” CAN HELP YOU BECOME “CARBON NEUTRAL”

To solve the challenge of climate change, we all need to address our personal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and make an effort to reduce them wherever possible. Even if you have an energy-efficient home, regularly walk or cycle to work, recycle waste and buy GreenPower electricity, you will still have a “carbon footprint” of several tonnes. Added to this, just one return flight to Europe could effectively undo all of your good work! Purchasing carbon offsets (available from projects that are actively reducing carbon emissions) is a practical and affordable way to do something about those unavoidable emissions.

### How do I become “Carbon Neutral”?

1. Reduce your emissions as much as possible by taking part in the Living Smart program. By making some easy changes aimed at using energy more efficiently, you will save money and prevent greenhouse gases from being produced.
2. Buy GreenPower - Buying renewable energy prevents the emission of greenhouse gas for the electricity you use (go to [www.greenpower.gov.au/home.aspx](http://www.greenpower.gov.au/home.aspx) for more information. Alternatively sign up with Synergy by calling 13 13 54 to purchase GreenPower generated in Western Australia).
3. Calculate your carbon footprint by using the Carbon Calculator on the Living Smart website (go to <http://www.dpi.wa.gov.au/livingsmart>). Calculating your carbon footprint identifies your households GHG emissions. This is the best way to determine how many offsets you may wish purchase.



**TANYA HA**, an expert in environmental living and the author of *Greenology* and *The Australian Green Consumer Guide* provides advice on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from your home.

4. Offset the rest - Even after you have made the changes suggested in the Living Smart program and subscribed to GreenPower, you will still not have reduced your GHG emissions to zero. For the remainder you can buy carbon offsets.

#### What are carbon offsets?

Carbon offset credits are created through a variety of projects that reduce or 'sequester' (store) GHG emissions. By buying carbon offsets, you can set them against your own emissions and reduce your climate impact. Carbon offset products most typically involve projects which invest in:

- energy efficiency;
- renewable energy;
- forestry activities.

Carbon offsets work on the fact that because GHG's have a global impact, an investment to reduce emissions somewhere else – even in another country – has the same climate benefit as if it were made locally.

#### How much do carbon credits cost?

The price of carbon offsets varies with the company providing the service and the source of the offset (e.g. forestry projects or renewable energy projects) and the market price.

As a rough guide, carbon offsets range in price from \$10 per tonne to \$40 per tonne (at February 2008 prices).

#### How do I know the carbon credits I buy are reducing GHG emissions?

You should always make sure that the carbon offsets you purchase are accredited by an independent body. In Australia the main accreditation program is the "Greenhouse Friendly" program.

There are also a number of international accreditation schemes, including:

- Kyoto Protocol Mechanisms (e.g. Clean Development Mechanism).
- Gold Standard.
- Voluntary Carbon Standard.

#### Are some types of carbon offsets better than others?

The "Gold Standard" for carbon offsets focuses on projects that contribute significantly to sustainable development outcomes in host countries, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, such as wind/solar power projects, and excludes carbon offsets from forestry projects. Forests absorb carbon while they are living, but they may one day be destroyed by disease, fire, or logging, releasing the carbon back into the atmosphere. Some forestry schemes tackle this issue by committing to cropping and removing plantations over 100 years but they still run the risk of being a temporary solution.

#### Where can I find more information?

The online Carbon Offset Guide is a resource for individuals seeking information about carbon offsets. The website provides an independent directory of Australian carbon offset providers. It offers information on available offsets in the following categories:

- price (per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> e);
- project location;
- project type;
- accreditation body/bodies.

<http://www.carbonoffsetguide.com.au/>

The Greenhouse Friendly website provides information to consumers on how to purchase products or services that have zero greenhouse impacts.

<http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/greenhousefriendly/consumers/index.html>

The Gold Standard is a Swiss-based non-profit foundation that provides a best practice methodology for accrediting carbon offsets. The website provides a directory of Gold Standard accredited carbon offset providers.

<http://www.cdmgoldstandard.org>