

# Sustainable Consumption



YOUNG AUSTRALIANS  
AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

NATIONAL  
**YOUTH**  
AFFAIRS  
RESEARCH  
SCHEME

# **SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION**

YOUNG AUSTRALIANS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

**A report for NYARS**

Matthew Bentley, John Fien and Cameron Neil

November 2004

**THE NATIONAL YOUTH AFFAIRS RESEARCH SCHEME (NYARS)** was established in 1985 as a cooperative funding arrangement between the Australian Government and the State and Territory Governments to facilitate nationally-based research into current social, political and economic factors affecting young people. The Scheme operates under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Reports from NYARS studies released since the early 1990s are available free-of-charge on the web site of the Australian Government Department responsible for youth affairs. At the time this report was published, the web site address was: <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/youth-nyars.htm>

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## Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation	LMCLP	Loddon Murray Community Leadership Program
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	LPI	Living Planet Index
ACA	Australian Consumers' Association	NEEC	National Environmental Education Council
ACYS	Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies	NEEN	National Environmental Education Network
AGSIRD	American Graduate School of International Relations and Diplomacy (Paris)	NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ANU	Australian National University	NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
ANZECC	Australian and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ARIES	Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability	R&D	Research and Development
ASEN	Australian Student Environment Network	RepuTex	Reputation Measurement Index
AYPE	Australian Youth Parliament for the Environment	RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
BCA	Business Council of Australia	RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
CACPK	Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Protection of Korea	SC	Sustainable Consumption
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	SCM	Social Change Media
CFL	Compact Fluorescent Light Bulb	SCPI	Sustainable Consumption Policy Index
CI	Consumers International	SCRAP	School Communities Recycling All Paper
CNAD	Centre for a New American Dream (USA)	SD	Sustainable Development
CP	Cleaner Production	SEAN	Student Environment Activism Network
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development (UN)	SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
DEH	Department of the Environment and Heritage	SSI	Sustainable Schools Initiative
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN)	TAFE	Technical and Further Education
DFaCS	Department of Family and Community Services	TLSF	Training and Learning for a Sustainable Future
ENSI	Environment and School Initiatives	TPA	Trade Practices Act
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	UN	United Nations
EU	European Union	UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
FYA	Foundation for Young Australians	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
GPI	Genuine Progress Index	UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organization
GU	Griffith University	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GYCA	Green Youth Consumer Alliance (Korea)	UNSW	University of New South Wales
HDI	Human Development Index	WELS	Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme
HK	Hong Kong	WI	Wellbeing Index
IPP	Integrated Product Policy	WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
IT	Information Technology	WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature
IUCN	The World Conservation Union	YAC	Youth Advisory Council
IYPF	International Young Professionals Foundation	YARN	Youth Affairs and Research Network
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment	YEC	Youth Environment Council
		YES	Youth Employment Summit

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# Executive summary

## 1. The study

The importance of enlisting the support of young people to encourage sustainable lifestyles has been recognised by youth organisations, governments, and United Nations agencies for several years. However, despite increasing policy attention, research and program initiatives on sustainable consumption in many countries, including Australia, there has yet to be a comprehensive examination of the links between youth consumption patterns, sustainability, and processes of social change. This study, commissioned by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS), fills this gap within the Australian context. The report explores how young people can be encouraged and empowered to make changes in their own consumption patterns as well as being catalysts for change in the wider community, thus helping to lead society in more sustainable lifestyle choices.

The report combines insights from consultations and interviews with young people, key youth representatives and service providers with information and insights from the literature on past and current initiatives in order to address the following objectives:

- *An exploration of youth culture and sustainable consumption:* Discuss the direct and indirect influences on young people's consumption patterns in Australia and how young people can

use and respond to these influences in a more constructive way to positively influence others.

- *An analysis of influences on young people's consumption:* Identify the enabling conditions within communities that need to exist so that young people can act effectively as agents of change.
- *The education of agents of change for sustainable consumption:* Identify a range of strategies that young people can undertake to become agents of change such as media campaigns, personal skill development and community campaigns.
- *The documentation of good practice:* Document good practice case studies and identify key features that successfully empower young people to be agents of change to influence peer and community consumption patterns.
- *The promotion of policies for sustainable consumption:* Explore the implications for government policy development and implementation.

## 2. Summary of findings

### 2.1 Exploring youth culture and sustainable consumption

The consumption patterns of young Australians are consistent with the qualities of contemporary consumer society. Young people establish their own

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identities through what they buy. They seek social inclusion by purchasing the newest and “coolest” products on the market. The desire to obtain the latest consumer gadgets helps fuel a competitive race. According to researchers Pocock and Clarke (2004) this contest “is one that many young people understand, resist, critique and mock – but participate in nevertheless”. However, at the same time many young Australians try hard to minimise their impact on the Earth and are eager to practice non-materialist lifestyles.

Young people represent a large proportion of total consumption expenditure in affluent societies such as Australia. In 2003 combined youth spending power in eleven major economies including Australia exceeded 750 billion dollars (US). Young Australians spend a large proportion of their money on leisure goods and activities. Clothes, food, entertainment and communications equipment are among the most popular. Today, teenagers in Australia lead the world in mobile telephone use, with 45 per cent of 13 to 15-year-olds owning a mobile phone. Young Australians spend around 13 per cent of their disposable income on mobile products.

Since 1950 the global economy has grown five-fold. Consumption of water, grain, beef and mutton has tripled, and paper consumption has risen six-fold. Although this unprecedented development has brought sweeping improvements in living standards throughout the world, the trend is clearly unsustainable. The impacts of consumerism are considerable and varied. For instance, environmental concerns such as global warming, land degradation, deforestation and pollution can all be traced to the demands put on Nature by contemporary consumer society. Indeed, consumption also affects health – over 50 per cent of people in Australia today are overweight – and influences labour rights in developing countries, animal rights, poverty, economic and social inequality, and wellbeing.

Australia as a rich and resourceful country has at its disposal the means to put in place measures that alleviate these problems at home and abroad. Sustainable consumption is a broad term that argues a multifaceted response to unsustainable consumption in developed economies such as Australia, and to under-consumption in the developing world. The common features of sustainable consumption definitions include an emphasis on:

- satisfying basic human needs (not the desire for “wants” and luxuries);
- privileging quality of life concerns over material standards of living;
- minimising resource use, waste and pollution;

- taking a life-cycle perspective in consumer decision-making; and
- acting with concern for future generations.

Sustainable consumption may appear a new concept; however its inherent principles (conservation, health, wellbeing, and social and environmental justice) have been shared by many Australians for generations. Today sustainable consumption policy and practice carries considerable weight in many policy-making arenas around the world. Many governments and international organisations have recognised the crucial value of policies that promote sustainable consumption. The United Nations has published a set of sustainable consumption guidelines for all governments and a new ten-year international program on sustainable consumption (2002–2011) ensures that new and innovative solutions to unsustainable consumption will continue to reverberate worldwide.

## 2.2 Analysing influences on youth consumption

This study has identified many of the main influences on young people’s consumption. These influences can be summarised as follows:

### Demand-side factors –

- cultural and historical values;
- political and socio-economic factors;
- knowledge factors; and
- socio-psychological factors.

### Supply-side factors –

- consumer culture and advertising;
- media and mass marketing in schools;
- green marketing; and
- national public policies.

While all factors are important, this study argues that advertising and the media must meet with special scrutiny. Young people consume considerable amounts of product advertising on an annual basis, and often do not comprehend the extent to which the media develops conceptions of desirable lifestyles and personal identities. However, an increasing number of young people are becoming conscious of the influence of the media in these matters, and this report identifies ways in which young people can use the media to promote sustainable lifestyles. Some key and successful messages to promote sustainable consumption to young people might include: “Sustainability is cool”; “It’s not far, you don’t need a car”; “Think before you buy”; and “More need, less want”.

Young Australians need to be part of any process to encourage sustainable consumption. Young people are potentially society's most potent agents of change. As such, the United Nations has identified five reasons for enlisting the support of young people in sustainable consumption campaigns:

- young people aged under 20 years make up 40 per cent of the world's population;
- young people make up a distinct consumer category and hence require a specific approach;
- young people directly or indirectly influence a large portion of family consumption;
- young people are more open to change; and
- the consumption patterns young people acquire today will influence their consumption patterns in their adult life and that of their children.

This study has found that young people believe that their peers buy too many consumer products. Young people are critical of aspects of consumer culture, but they are not always critical of consumption as a way of life. Many young people are clearly unhappy, and unfulfilled by consumer society. Indeed, this point is substantiated by evidence of young people seeking out alternative, and in many cases sustainable, lifestyles. Many young people are vigilant water and energy resource-savers (conservationism), animal rights supporters (vegetarianism) and health conscious (wellbeing). Encouragingly, young people are also highly concerned about the environment and the wellbeing of others, and accept their individual responsibility for sustainable consumption. However, a high level of social concern does not necessarily translate into personal action. This disconnection has been explained through ambivalence young people feel about social problems and solutions. The limited opposition by adults toward some important social issues in society has caused many young people to become disenchanted, pessimistic, and often even angry. Ambivalence and a lost sense of purpose/belonging in the consumer society restrict many young people from taking action. Other barriers to action on sustainable consumption include:

- packaging is everywhere;
- people are constantly told to consume more;
- lack of time and money;
- political and community support;
- motivation, selfishness;
- lack of training and education;
- habit, embarrassment and shyness;
- not knowing what brands are sustainable; and
- turning knowledge into action.

There are solutions to all of these barriers. There is a range of enabling conditions within

communities that need to exist so that young people can act on sustainable consumption. These include investing in ideas and action, political support for more sustainable living, listening to young people, and education and awareness raising. In fact most of the enabling factors can be incorporated into integrated sustainable consumption capacity building programs.

### **2.3 Educating agents of change for sustainable consumption**

The need to empower young people to become effective and important leaders for social improvement is clearly recognised through the commissioning of this project. There are many ways to empower young people. These include general techniques associated with training and education, media campaigns, social marketing, networking, civic participation and political participation. This study argues that generic youth empowerment activities must be combined with sustainable consumption tools and strategies to deliver the desired result of empowering sustainable consumption change agents.

This study highlights the individual tools and strategies available to help young people change their consumption patterns and to encourage them to promote sustainability in their communities. Although there are few materials that engage young people in learning over time of the various elements of sustainable consumption and effective community action, strategies have been identified for individual, family, institutional and community action. While each individual program has its strengths and successes, overall, the social, community, environmental impact may be enhanced by a less fragmented approach and the development of more integrated strategies that focus on youth development and community change through a lens of achieving more sustainable consumption.

The capacity building program devised for this project is informed by the importance of developing integrated strategies for young people to become sustainable consumption change agents. The program includes, in some form, every strategy and change area discussed in the report. Sustainable consumption as an issue and driver of change lends itself very well to such a treatment because of the breadth of social, economic and environmental issues that it relates to. Young sustainable consumption change agents have a large challenge and any number of possible approaches to making positive change. That is why a holistic approach to sustainable consumption capacity building is

clearly the most effective means to inspire changes in community consumption patterns. The Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents program is a model for introducing young people to the concept of sustainable consumption, providing some signposts towards further education, training and action, and equipping them with some basic tools and support systems for them to start “being change agents”.

While not a core focus of youth policy in Australia, sustainable consumption is an ideal entry point for young people into a range of youth development activities. The study argues that because of the breadth of sustainable consumption most young people will find something of interest and relevance to them in their own lives, e.g. water use, animal rights, politics and designing new technologies. In addition, an action-orientated approach within a sustainable consumption framework may assist young people develop a sense of purpose larger than themselves, and thus help mitigate increased feelings of unhappiness and ambivalence by many young people.

## 2.4 Documenting good practice

This report presents fourteen case studies that demonstrate a range of actions to encourage young people to adopt sustainable consumption patterns. The case studies have been grouped into the following four general categories: (1) training and education, (2) web sites, (3) networks and programs, and (4) other tools.

Young people can learn about the impacts of consumption through such methods as the ecological footprint exercise, discussing sustainable consumption solutions at training courses, conferences and through online networks, finding out ideas for community action through information clearinghouses, and getting involved in waste recycling and reusing campaigns in their schools and communities through such programs as Waste Wise Schools and SCRAP. Education for sustainable consumption is another important component discussed in the case studies. Teaching materials by Oxfam on fair trade and by USA-based Sustainability Education Center on changing consumption patterns are a few of the many examples available.

This broad range of case studies can be viewed as evidence of the considerable progress that has been made in recent years to encourage young people to change their lifestyles. However, many of the activities available are operating in other countries and have yet to be replicated in Australia. For instance, Australia is yet to provide meaningful

acknowledgment of the global UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange initiative on sustainable consumption. Australia is also yet to follow the example of other countries such as Mexico, Korea and Germany that have implemented national YouthXchange programs. Additionally, there is little evidence of the existence of integrated curricula on sustainable consumption in schools or universities in Australia.

## 2.5 Promoting policies for sustainable consumption

### 2.5.1 General policy context

There is no magic solution to unsustainable consumption in Australia. A mix of conventional and innovative sustainable consumption policies need to be implemented in an integrated manner to encourage the proliferation of more sustainable lifestyles. Conventional policies such as those that encourage the development and use of environmentally and socially sound products and services, and that promote recycling and reuse by consumers, are a few of the ways governments promote sustainable consumption. However, conventional policies alone will not be enough to achieve sustainable consumption under current circumstances. The defining elements of a new sustainable consumption policy paradigm is a realisation by government of the critical role it plays in shaping individual consumer behaviour through institutional, social, cultural and ethical factors, and the responsibility it has to empower people to affect changes in their own lifestyles. Government should operate within a collaborative framework with industry and the public, and build trust by carrying out independent reviews of progress.

To this end, two recommendations for general policy development into which policies and programs for youth sustainable consumption can be located are made:

#### Recommendation 1:

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments clarify current policies in light of the United Nations guidelines on sustainable consumption, and consider new innovative approaches that reflect an emphasis on sustainability and wellbeing, business and industry, and public support and cooperation.

#### Recommendation 2:

That the Australian Government facilitate partnerships with other governments, business and non-governmental organisations (including universities, schools, etc.) to encourage policy review mechanisms and indicators which monitor progress

towards sustainable consumption targets and make this information publicly available as part of a public awareness and education strategy.

### **2.5.2 A national youth and sustainable consumption program**

A national youth and sustainable consumption program should build on the successful components of this project including the sustainable consumption training initiative and the sustainable consumption workbook for youth workshop participants. The responsibility for changing consumption patterns rests with a wide range of change agents in Australia. Hence, partnerships between government, business and non-governmental organisations (including universities, schools, etc.) will be essential for fostering sustainable consumption among young Australians. A nationwide program for developing sustainable consumption change agents should bring together Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local government representatives as well as informed young people, key youth service providers and industry partners.

The main elements of an ideal program would be:

- appointment and resourcing of a secretariat/committee – that includes young people – to manage the national program;
- an Australian version of the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange training guide and web site on sustainable consumption;
- a Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents program in each State and Territory modelled on the small-scale initiative outlined in this report;
- a small grants program for young people who develop sustainable consumption projects in their communities through program participation and an annual national awards program for sustainable consumption projects initiated by program participants; and
- links with other national programs on sustainable consumption (e.g. South Korea and Germany) and with international programs such as YouthXchange.

#### **Appointing a secretariat/committee of young people**

A small secretariat and committee of young people should be appointed to oversee the implementation and provide support for the ongoing functions of the national program. The secretariat would be responsible

for the maintenance of the web site/training guide; the selection process, preparation (train-the-trainer sessions) and oversight of community host organisations for program rollout; and the delivery of annual progress reports. The national program could also fund research on sustainable consumption and consider using social marketing techniques in national campaigns to educate young people on sustainable consumption.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental representatives, appoint and resource a secretariat and committee of young people to administer the national sustainable consumption program.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

That a partnership platform be established between governments, business and civil society to promote consumer awareness of existing product labels that support sustainable consumption, such as resource saving, environmental protection, animal rights, fair trade, labour rights. This partnership platform could undertake a national social marketing campaign to increase awareness and consumption of goods under these labels, and promote the entry of new labels as appropriate.

#### **Ensuring the availability of the appropriate resources and support**

Young people consulted for this study have identified their need for more resources on sustainable consumption. There are several tools and strategies available that encourage sustainable lifestyles such as ecological footprint analysis and sustainable purchasing guides. However the information is often fragmented and rarely takes a holistic view of pursuing sustainable consumption. Information and education for sustainable consumption modules, guides, networks and web sites could be modelled on international initiatives such as the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange training kit on sustainable consumption, and programs underway in countries like South Korea and the USA. Ideas from the Australian Government's Sustainable Schools Initiative should also be considered. The sustainable consumption workbook designed for use by young people consulted for this project includes many of the important elements to be covered in a sustainable consumption education strategy.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations,

lead the development of a national “YouthXchange”-style sustainable consumption resource kit/web site for young Australians.

**Recommendation 6:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments encourage education for sustainable development actors to include modules on sustainable consumption for young people, and facilitate the development of new education for sustainable consumption tools and resources for high school curricula.

**Enhancing young people’s capacities to become sustainable consumption change agents**

This report argues that the key to developing young agents of change for sustainable consumption is through developing action competence. The action competence approach for sustainable consumption emphasises the need for learning and skill development. Although sustainable consumption training programs should include modules that discuss the impacts of consumerism and sustainable consumption solutions, the most important features include encouraging youth participation, leadership development, community and organisational support, networking opportunities and follow-up activities. There are several sustainable consumption tools and strategies available that, when used in combination, spawn a powerful method for empowering young agents of change for sustainable consumption. It is recommended that the Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia program (see Case Study 5.2.1) be expanded in order to encourage sustainable consumption training and capacity building opportunities for young Australians.

**Recommendation 7:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations, encourage sustainable consumption training and capacity building opportunities for all young Australians.

**Developing small grants and national awards programs**

A number of schemes and programs could be established to provide financial incentives and other forms of recognition for young people who work toward sustainable consumption. For instance, we recommend a small grants scheme – similar to initiatives facilitated by the Foundation for Young Australians – that support young people and

organisations working with young people (local governments, community groups, etc.) to conduct sustainable consumption-related projects. A yearly national awards program could be developed from this small grants program that would not only recognise achievements and promote sustainable consumption, but also provide a framework for evaluation of programs and their impacts.

**Recommendation 8:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations, develop a small grants program for young people who develop sustainable consumption projects in their communities and an annual national awards program for sustainable consumption projects.

**Establishing links with national and global programs**

There are many opportunities to link existing programs that foster sustainable consumption at home and abroad with a national sustainable consumption program. For instance, partnership opportunities should be explored with Australian programs such as the Sustainable Living Project, the Sustainable Schools Initiative and the Waste Wise Schools program as well as international activities such as the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange initiative. In addition, sustainable consumption is considered one of the key action themes of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), and therefore links should be explored between the UN Decade and a national youth and sustainable consumption program.

**Recommendation 9:**

That the Australian Government support the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, and promote links between the Decade and a national youth and sustainable consumption program in Australia.

**2.5.3 Further research**

This study may be viewed as an important preface to the considerable work that is likely to follow on sustainable consumption in Australia. Although the study describes many of the advantages of pursuing sustainable consumption through a youth change agent paradigm, a major strategic review that fully explores the economic, social and environmental benefits of encouraging sustainable consumption in Australia was clearly beyond the scope of this project. In addition, the study has identified several gaps that may be filled by appropriate youth sector and other academic research.

**Recommendation 10:**

That the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments, in partnership with business and community organisations, undertake a comprehensive strategic review on sustainable consumption policy and patterns in Australia.

**Recommendation 11:**

That research further explores the link between young people's consumption and such phenomena as downshifting, eco-spirituality, quality of life, ambivalence/unhappiness, action competence and sustainable lifestyles.

**2.5.4 Conclusion**

Consumption may be the cause of many social and environmental problems, but it is also crucial to human survival. This is the ultimate paradox. Indeed, consumption is a powerful vehicle through which present and future solutions to the problems of unsustainability may be reached. Sustainable consumption is the embodiment of a new paradigm for consumption in Australia. A key factor in its probability of success will be the empowerment of young change agents for sustainable consumption.





# Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the project

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) is a cooperative funding program between the Australian Government and the State and Territory Governments. Since 1985 it has been facilitating nationally-based research into current social, political and economic factors affecting young people. This is the first time that a NYARS research project has explored the theme of *sustainable consumption*. This decision to conduct research into ways that consumption can be harnessed to lead to a more sustainable society reflects the increased attention on sustainable consumption in national and international policy circles and the enthusiastic desire of many young people to make a change in the world through more considered lifestyle choices.

Sustainable consumption is a major component of sustainable development theory and practice. The 1992 blueprint for sustainable development – Agenda 21 – included a chapter on sustainable consumption. The United Nations has established a set of voluntary guidelines for governments to use when formulating and implementing sustainable consumption policies and recently instigated a new ten-year international program on sustainable consumption.

For over a decade, sustainable consumption has been regarded as an appropriate response to concerns about diminished health and wellbeing, third-world

poverty, human and animal rights abuses and a plethora of environmental problems. Sustainable consumption represents a flexible concept that can imply more, less or efficient consumption, depending on the consumption behaviour of the individual concerned. Young people represent a large slice of consumption expenditure in Australia, and hold sway over the discretionary spending in many households. Given the right environment and opportunities young people can influence the consumption patterns of many people. Therefore, their support is critical. Sustainable consumption has great potential as an ideal entry point for young people into a range of youth development activities, and can act as an umbrella topic to address a range of interrelated issues affecting young people.

This investigation into methods to empower young Australians to become agents of change for sustainable consumption mirrors similar work undertaken in other developed economies and also at the international level by the United Nations. Some valuable activities that have led to this study include: the Australian Government's (1996) review of initiatives to promote sustainable consumption; South Australian Office for Youth (2000) discussion paper on youth and sustainable consumption; and the UNESCO–UNEP (2002) YouthXchange training kit on sustainable consumption.

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## 1.2 Project partners

The project was jointly undertaken by Griffith University and the International Young Professionals Foundation.

Griffith University has established a national reputation for its work on environmental education and youth empowerment, and an international reputation for its work on education for sustainable consumption. The Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre, which operates from within the Griffith University EcoCentre, provides environmental education programs and activities for schools and individual students. The activities cover a wide range of sustainable consumption issues, including ecological footprint analyses. The 2002 Griffith University–UNESCO multimedia teacher education program *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* devotes a module to sustainable consumption.

The International Young Professionals Foundation (IYPF) is a not-for-profit Australian public company, founded by Australian youth and young professionals, working in the fields of human rights, poverty eradication, environment and social capital, within the broad context of sustainability. It utilises and promotes the resources, skills and knowledge that young people can bring to this arena in order to create a better world for current and future generations. IYPF has a proven track record of building young people's capacities to bring about change in their own lives and in the wider community. Some staff and members of IYPF have participated in major sustainable consumption projects for the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNESCO.

The principal project team made up of two staff from Griffith University and one staff member from IYPF solicited the views of a wide range of internal and external experts to achieve the project objectives and develop the capacity building program for sustainable consumption change agents. These people were referred to in the Acknowledgments. The project team is keen to remain at the forefront of research and action-orientated youth programs on sustainable consumption in Australia.

## 1.3 Objectives and research design

The project was designed to accomplish the following research objectives:

- Discuss the direct and indirect influences on young people's consumption patterns in Australia and how young people can use and respond to these influences in a more constructive way to positively influence others.
- Identify the enabling conditions within

communities that need to exist so that young people can act as agents of change.

- Identify a range of strategies that young people can undertake to become agents of change such as media campaigns, personal skill development and community campaigns.
- Document good practice case studies and identify key features that successfully empower young people to be agents of change to influence peer and community consumption patterns.
- Explore the implications for government policy development and implementation.

A number of methods were used to explore and meet these objectives. These methods comprise several key components.

### Component 1:

*Review of academic and policy-related literature*

A major review of literature from several academic disciplines and various government policy discourses was conducted for the project. The literature review covered: contending views of consumption today; the impacts of consumption; sustainable consumption definitions; the evolution of sustainable consumption theory and practice; direct and indirect influences on young people's consumption; enabling conditions needed to change consumption patterns; and youth views on consumption and sustainability.

### Component 2:

*A review of techniques to empower young people and a review of sustainable consumption tools and strategies*

There are many ways young people can become agents of change. General techniques within the following broad categories have been discussed: training and education; media; social marketing; networking; civic participation; and political participation. Although education and learning for sustainable consumption remains a relatively underdeveloped field in Australia, a number of tools and strategies already exist for empowering young people to become change agents for sustainable consumption. For example, the Sustainable Schools Initiative incorporates teaching on many sustainable consumption principles. However, some of the available strategies have been designed for use in other countries or developed by international organisations such as UNESCO, and thus may appear unsuitable for many young Australians. Nevertheless, many of the techniques, tools and strategies reviewed were incorporated into the project team's Capacity

Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia program. See Appendix 1 for contact information for the sustainable consumption tools and strategies discussed in this report.

### **Component 3:**

*A national survey of 224 young people on sustainable consumption*

A survey of 224 young Australians was conducted between November 2003 and April 2004. The survey was designed to explore: the nature and extent of youth consumption; some of the drivers of consumption; links between consumption, social issues and sustainability; youth definitions of sustainable consumption; and potential barriers to and enablers of sustainable lifestyles. The survey was designed using as a guide past youth surveys on sustainable consumption (Moody–UNESCO 2000; Bentley 2001). The survey was tested by a small number of young people and amendments were made before distribution to youth networks and youth organisations in all States and Territories. Surveys were distributed and returned by email, in person and through the post. Many young people from all States and Territories were exposed to the survey, and the survey provided valuable insights into youth views on their consumption and their hopes for a sustainable future. See Appendix 4 for a copy of the survey instrument.

### **Component 4:**

*The design and implementation of a Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia program, which included five sustainable consumption workshops*

The program was designed to achieve four objectives: (1) to elicit the views of young people on sustainable consumption and what it would take to support them to be agents of change in their community for more sustainable consumption; (2) to provide information on sustainable consumption possibilities, tools for analysing consumption impacts and critical thinking skills for exploring and evaluating alternative consumption choices; (3) to enhance skills in personal decision-making and youth leadership; (4) and to utilise the results of the literature review (Chapter 2), the results of the survey (Section 3.2) and case studies of tools and programs that were researched (Chapters 4 and 5) to develop and test an “ideal” or “model” program for achieving the underlying goal of the research project – young people being equipped as agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities. The main feature of the program was

an interactive set of five sustainable consumption workshops comprising train-the-trainer sessions and workshops for young people. The five series of workshops were held in Adelaide, Bendigo, Brisbane, the Mornington Peninsula and Sydney (pilot workshop) between July 2003 and April 2004. A diverse number of young people participated in these workshops including young professionals, students and unemployed young people. Elements of the program were tested at a pilot workshop facilitated in Sydney during the Eco-Innovate 03 Conference in July 2003. Several host organisations were selected to participate in the train-the-trainer sessions and co-facilitate the workshops with young people in their local communities and provide feedback to the research team and ongoing support of the participants of the workshops for young people. The project team developed a sustainable consumption workbook that included a detailed list of sustainable consumption tools and strategies (see Appendix 1). A copy of the workbook was provided to each workshop participant. A number of sustainable consumption materials were also made available to all participants online. Unfortunately, due to the time and resource constraints of the project we were unable to respond to requests to convene workshops in the Northern Territory, in Logan (south of Brisbane) and in the Port Adelaide/Enfield community. See Appendix 2 for a full discussion of the capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents program. See Appendix 3 for the workshop evaluation form.

### **Component 5:**

*Face-to-face discussions with key youth representatives and informed young people*

To support findings from the national survey and five youth workshops and to provide further opportunities for young people to express their views on sustainable consumption, a number of discussions were organised with key youth representatives and informed young people. These face-to-face discussions were facilitated in Adelaide, Bendigo, Brisbane and the Mornington Peninsula during the capacity building program orchestrated for this NYARS project.

### **Component 6:**

*A review of a wide range of good practice case studies*

The report includes 14 good practice case studies. The case studies were selected to reflect a range of Australian and international examples, and with an emphasis on those that the research team believes

have the most potential to successfully empower young people in Australia to be agents of change to influence peer and community consumption patterns. All case studies have been grouped into the following four general categories: training and education; web sites; networks and programs; and other tools. The project team's own Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia project for young people and the international YouthXchange program by UNEP–UNESCO are among those discussed. The implications of all these activities for Australian organisations and Australian government agencies have been highlighted.

### **Component 7:**

*A discussion of sustainable consumption policies and implications for youth sector policy implementation*

The project team drew upon their considerable knowledge of sustainable consumption policy to discuss a range of conventional sustainable consumption policies and put forward a case for a new sustainable consumption policy paradigm. The UN guidelines on sustainable consumption as well as surveys of Australia's progress on implementing sustainable consumption policies are used as starting points for much of the initial discussions. Research by Jackson and Michaelis (2003) conducted for the UK Sustainable Development Commission is cited during an exploration into a set of basic principles for a sustainable consumption strategy. The review acknowledges the need to emphasise wellbeing and engage industry in new sustainable consumption initiatives for young people. See Appendix 5 for the complete United Nations guidelines on sustainable consumption and Appendix 6 for a detailed list of sustainable consumption policies.

## **1.4 Structure of the report**

The report consists of seven chapters and seven appendices. Chapter 2 reviews literature relevant to several key themes including contending views on material consumption in today's world, definitions of sustainable consumption, influences on consumption patterns and the link between sustainable consumption and young people. A wide variety of sources were explored for this review including information from related government programs, academic literature on environment, sociology and economics, and several international resources such as UNESCO–UNEP activities on sustainable consumption. The chapter highlights the importance of encouraging sustainable consumption and expresses how young people can act as valuable change agents for sustainable consumption in Australia.

Chapter 3 examines the views of young people on their consumption patterns, the influences on these patterns, and the barriers to and enablers for practicing sustainability. The chapter expresses these views through four methods: a review of the literature; a survey; five workshops; and several face-to-face discussions with key youth representatives and well-informed young people. The discussions lead to a few major conclusions that were vital for shaping recommendations for future action.

Chapter 4 highlights a number of general techniques available to develop young agents of change, and specific tools and strategies for youth action on sustainable consumption. The general techniques are grouped into six main categories. Several sustainable consumption tools are discussed for individuals, families, institutions and communities.

Chapter 5 evaluates fourteen sustainable consumption case studies from all over the world. Each of the case studies are discussed in relation to the implications they might have for Australian programs and policies. The project team's capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents in Australia program is one of the case studies evaluated.

Chapter 6 summarises conventional sustainable consumption policies, discusses research on a new paradigm for sustainable consumption policy and draws out the main policy implications of the study.

Chapter 7 presents a set of recommendations to further equip young people to act as agents of change for more sustainable consumption. The chapter highlights some areas for potential future research.

## **1.5 Note on scope of the report**

The sustainable consumption survey was one component not included in the original project brief submitted to NYARS. The project managers added this component after the tender had been awarded to the project team. The questionnaire was included in the project design because of a discovered shortage of data on the views of young Australians on issues related to sustainable consumption. The questionnaire is one of the first surveys of its kind to be carried out in Australia. Young people from all States and Territories in Australia responded to the questionnaire, and the feedback was instrumental in forming several important conclusions. The Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents program brings to the project an innovative and versatile model to empower young people to take action on sustainable consumption in their communities. This program has the potential to

be replicated in other cities and communities and possibly become part of a major initiative to build young people's capacities to encourage sustainable consumption in Australia.

This project uncovered a considerable interest in sustainable consumption among young people and those that work with them. The project also generated a new level of awareness in many young Australians. Unfortunately, many proposals and requests from young people and several organisations for further workshops and other activities were not able to be fulfilled as they were beyond the scope of this project. We are hopeful that this upward momentum on sustainable consumption activities in Australia will be maintained, and a wider range of young Australians will be exposed to the intrinsic worth of sustainable consumption in the future.



# Exploring sustainable consumption

## 2.1 Introduction

Sustainable consumption is a term relatively new to academic literature. However, the principles inherent in sustainable consumption (conservation, health, wellbeing, social and environmental justice) have been written about for centuries. The nineteenth-century American scholar Henry Thoreau, for example, describes in his 1854 masterpiece *Walden* an experiment in “living well”. The condition to which his book is the antidote – the delusion that material things can bring one happiness, that labour in and of itself is good, and that Nature can be ignored – has spread from Europe and the United States to the entire world (Furius 1997).

If we do not get our sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us.

Thoreau in *Walden* (1854)

Even though writings on sustainable consumption are more prevalent today, the inter-disciplinary nature of consumption literature means information on sustainable consumption is often fragmented across academic disciplines and intertwined with

other socio-ecological problems. This literature review endeavours to summarise this vast quantity of material and address some of the main arguments for sustainable consumption.

If young Australians are to act on sustainable consumption it is important that all Australians comprehend the social and environmental impacts of consumption. An assessment of some of the contending views on today’s consumer society is the objective of Section 2.2. The development of sustainable consumption as a new policy discourse, a discussion of its widely-agreed meaning and the key elements required to change consumption patterns are addressed in Section 2.3. Finally, Section 2.4 builds a case for eliciting the support of young Australians in a drive to reorient consumption toward sustainability.

### 2.1.1 Consuming the globe

Although emerging concerns about consumption have an environmental dimension, they transcend narrowly biophysical considerations to embrace issues of community, work, meaning, freedom, and the overall quality of life. For some the concern is consumerism, the crass elevation of material acquisition to the status of a dominant social paradigm. For others it is commoditisation, the substitution of marketable

goods and services for personal relationships, self-provisioning, culture, artistic expression, and other sources of human wellbeing. For still others it is overconsumption, in the popularly understood sense of using more than is necessary. For most, these themes converge in a troubled, intuitive understanding that tinkering at the margins of production processes and purchasing behaviour will not get society on an ecologically and socially sustainable path.

(Princen et al. 2002)

Since 1950 the global economy has quintupled. Consumption of water, grain, beef and mutton has tripled, whereas paper consumption has risen six-fold (Brown et al. 1999). In fact, humankind has consumed more natural resources in the past five decades than in all previous human history. The trend is clearly unsustainable. Consumption, though, is crucial to our survival. Hence, digressing to a more sustainable consumption path remains a central challenge for this current century.

The people of the developed countries are among the world's largest consumers of natural resources and their production and consumption patterns have major environmental, social and economic impacts around the world. As indicated in the 1998 *Human Development Report* (UNDP 1998), for example, the 20 per cent of the world's population living in OECD countries: earn 85 per cent of the world's annual income; consume 75 per cent of global energy and over 80 per cent of other resources annually; and generate 75 per cent of annual global pollution (see also Carley and Spapens, 1998, pp. 338–470). Indeed, recent research suggests that a world “consumer class” has emerged and currently stands at 1.73 billion people (Bentley 2003). A consumer class of over 600 million in Asia today has spurred much debate about ways to reorient consumption patterns before ecological and social disasters strike. For example, China's capacity to consume is enormous. If the Chinese were to consume wood products at the Japanese rate, their demand would exceed Japan's nine times over (Myers 2000). Too much consumption in rich countries also affects health. Over 50 per cent of people in countries such as the US and the UK are overweight (Barber 2001). While these problems are disturbing, they pale beside those of the 2.8 billion people around the world who do not have adequate access to food, water and shelter. Consumption provides one of the most potent examples of the inequalities that exist today.

In virtually every large city on Earth it is possible to eat at a “fast food” restaurant and drink bottled soft drinks. A manufacturing plant in Asia could be almost identical to those found in the US and products

processed in one country are commonly exported to another to be consumed. Consumer tastes are converging worldwide, further perpetuating the risks of food contamination and disease. Partly because of the inter-connected nature of the global market for goods, and partly due size, consumption patterns can impact on the environment and the wellbeing of people far from the source of the original consumer purchase.

The damage brought on by consumption is huge. Today, nearly 40 per cent of the world's agricultural land is seriously degraded (Wood 2000). This is just one environmental concern, but a major one, as it reflects our capacity to produce food. But others do exist, including soil salinity, deforestation, pollution and global warming. All are results of our consumption behaviour. Indeed, consumption not only impacts upon the environment but also is directly related to labour rights in developing countries, animal rights, poverty and economic and social inequality. Where, how, and by whom our consumer goods are produced are becoming more important questions than ever. Indeed, many people are now beginning to question dominant modes of production and ask whether animals were used to test the products they might purchase; or whether the clothes they might buy were made by child labourers in Asia. As Klaus Toepfer, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme notes:

Consumers are increasingly interested in the world that lies behind the product they buy. Apart from price and quality, they want to know how, where and whom has produced the product. This increasing awareness about environmental and social issues is a sign of hope. Governments and industry must build on that.

(Toepfer 2000)

There is a growing acknowledgment from many eminent persons of the unsustainability of consumption. Indeed, response has come at the international level in the form of statements, action plans and more recently, agreements (see Section 2.3). But it was at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 when sustainable consumption first secured international prominence. The action plan from the summit, Agenda 21, included a chapter on changing consumption patterns. The objectives of “Agenda 21, Chapter 4” include: (i) promoting efficiency in production patterns and reduce wasteful consumption in the process of economic growth, taking into account the development needs of developing countries, and (ii) developing a policy framework that will encourage a shift to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Because developed countries, such as Australia, were considered at the time to be the

biggest consumers, and hence the biggest polluters, they were encouraged to take a leading role in promoting sustainable patterns of consumption.

### 2.1.2 Consuming Australia

Australia typifies the contemporary consumer society. Australians now spend twice as much on their consumption as they did 50 years ago. In 1999, Australian households spent an average of \$699 each week on goods and services. This was an increase of 16 per cent since 1993 (ABS 1999). Every day, thousands of consumer goods are sold around the country. New electronic and mobile communications products have been the latest craze. In June 2001, 56 per cent of Australians owned a mobile phone (Arnold et al. 2003); meaning that about 11 million handsets had hit the market in the last few years. The lure of the motor vehicle is also still strong in Australian society. The passenger vehicle fleet increased by 895,000 or 9.7 per cent in the five years from 1997–2002 (ABS 2002). That is an average of 180,000 new cars every year. In fact, Australia owns more cars per 100 persons than the USA (Fien and Skoien 2000).

Increased consumption has brought lifestyle improvements, such as in health and communications. However, as in the global context, the social and environmental impacts appear equally decisive. Indeed, of all countries in the world, Australia ranks second only to the USA in the size of its ecological footprint (Chambers et al. 2000).

Australia's environmental problems are widely known. They include: air and water pollution, land degradation, coral reef destruction and loss of biodiversity. The correlation of such concerns with our materialist lifestyles is increasingly accepted. As the latest NSW State of the Environment report argues, "the affluent lifestyles of NSW residents are unsustainable as people use more electricity, travel further by car and guzzle too much water". The amount of land needed to produce goods and services for NSW – the ecological footprint – has increased by 32 per cent in just five years. It now takes 7.4 hectares of land to maintain each Sydneysider's lifestyle, an increase of 16 per cent in the past five years (NSW EPA 2003). In addition, new pressures will appear as a direct result of Australia's ageing population. A relatively fit and wealthy generation of new retirees will soon place an added burden on the environment through increased consumption if consumer principles are not embedded in the consumer's psyche.

Of course, ecological concerns are only one aspect of how consumption impacts on Australian society. Health, animal rights, wellbeing and the livelihoods

of people overseas are all affected each time we make a decision to consume a particular product. For example, obesity and cardiovascular disease, largely an outcome of our fast-food culture, is the number one cause of death in Australia.

## 2.2 The consumer society

### 2.2.1 Consumption defined

The term consumption invokes a number of different meanings. Hence, understanding the context is critically important. Consumption is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) as:

1. The action or fact of consuming or destroying; destruction;
2. The dissipation of moisture by evaporation;
3. Decay, wasting away, or wearing out; waste;
4. Wasting of the body by disease;
5. Wasteful expenditure, waste;
6. The using up of material, the use of anything as food, or for the support of any process;
7. The destructive employment of or utilisation of the products of industry.

Interestingly, four of the seven definitions see the act of consumption in negative terms. Waste and destruction are key themes.

Even so, one does not need to look too far before unearthing the pre-eminent directive. Consumerism is defined by the same dictionary (Oxford 1989) as the "Name given to a doctrine advocating a continual increase in the consumption of goods as a basis for a sound economy". Traditional economic theory has always defined consumption as positive, where more is considered better than less. For instance, Keynes asserted that "men [sic] are disposed, as a rule and on the average, to increase their consumption as their income increases" (Keynes 1936).

On the other hand, Otnes (1988) uses Hirsch's 1976 notion of "commodity fetishism" to argue that consumption is more than the buying and using of goods and services, and is due to deeper meaning as an expression of one's personality and cultural identity (Otnes 1988). And, amidst the angst many feel in contemporary society, he argues that consumption needs to be "understood in relation to processes of alienation and fetishism in modern capitalist society" which encourages overconsumption as an attempt to "overcome the estrangement and lack of real human relations in society" (Otnes 1988).

These contrasting views highlight that there are many theories of consumption, with many of the recent ones reflecting neo-Marxist and post-modern critiques of contemporary society (Lunt 1992). For example, cultural attributes are discussed by

Baudrillard (1970) and Parry and Bloch (1989), the social nature of commodities by Appadurai (1986), commodity appropriation and consumption work by Miller (1987), taste and consumption by Bourdieu (1979), and conspicuous leisure and consumption by Veblen (1899).

While these scholarly critiques focus on the negative effects of consumption, consumption remains the crucial instrument for satisfying human needs. Without consumption human society would cease to exist (Pausacker 1981). Thus, Aldridge (2003) points out that consumption is such a hugely important part of modern life, and its influence so profound, that “it is rarely adequately addressed”. Consumption, therefore, should be considered in light of its potential to bring about social change, rather than just on how it perverts society.

While consumption may be a cause of many social and environmental ills, it is also a vehicle through which present and future solutions to the problems of unsustainability may be reached.

(Fien 2000)

### 2.2.2 Consumption today

Today’s consumer society can be traced back to as far as sixteenth-century England (Mukerji 1983; McCracken 1990). Although the consumer “boom” of this period only involved a few thousand people, it demonstrated a notable change in consumption expenditure as the nobleman of Elizabethan England began to spend on an unprecedented scale. McCracken argues that “in the process they dramatically transformed their world of goods and the nature of Western consumption” by changing their lifestyles, by taking on second residences in London and spending lavishly on huge functions for themselves and their monarch (McCracken 1990).

More widespread “consumer booms” took place in eighteenth-century Europe and by the nineteenth-century a recognisable model of mass consumption had taken hold. Shopping centres and the emergence of new consumer lifestyles spread widely throughout the Western world (Desmond 2003). Global corporations, governments and the advertising industry have adapted quickly to the opportunities made available by new technologies, spreading global products and services to all corners of the globe, spurring the creation of a new breed of consumers who want the same things to eat, drink, play with and wear.

This new global consumer culture can be characterised partly by a growing emphasis on the individual, by a search for wider opportunities and

experiences (professional and leisure), by a desire for comfort and autonomy, and by personal material accumulation (UNEP 2000). But other writers, such as Erich Fromm (1979) and Ivan Illich (1975), have rather suggested that modern compulsive consumption and addiction might result from a search for meaning in a society that has lost its spiritual direction.

A “McDonaldisation of Society”, as Ritzer (1993) claimed, is defined by increased efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control through substitution of human labour with technology and international rationalisation. Although heavily criticised after its release in 1993, Ritzer’s book *The McDonaldization of Society* emphasised the existence of a consumer society willing to accept low quality “junk” food from organisations with poor social and environmental records. According to Ritzer, “The McDonald’s experience in eating is an example of assembly-line consumption that is hardly conducive to conversation and social interaction” (Alfino et al. 1998). This may be the case, but if modern consumer society is eroding opportunities for human social interaction, what, if anything, is replacing our need for social participation?

As Baudrillard (1970) notes, the modern shopping mall creates a fantasy world in which new desires and identities are created. People now experience shopping as a social activity. Consumers are manipulated by store “ambience” (Lunt 1992; Michaelis 2000) in a manner that conjures up thoughts of the interior design of modern casinos. Consumption choices are less about satisfaction of needs and more about involvement in a mode of social activity. The shopping centre opens the door to those willing participants of modern society (Lunt 1992). Consumerism has become the means by which desires of social participation can be met, while at the same time practising a leisure activity.

We have reached the point where “consumption” has grasped the whole of life; where all activities are sequenced in the same combinatorial mode; where the schedule of gratification is outlined in advance, one hour at a time; and where the “environment” is complete, completely climatized, furnished and cultured.

(Baudrillard 1970, cited in Otnes 1988)

### 2.2.3 A post-materialist society?

There is evidence that some quarters of society are adopting new lifestyles that consider the quality of life more important than material accumulation. The abundance of literature on post-materialism and the release of new sustainable consumption teaching curricula in the past five years reflect the growth

of this contemporary movement (Ryan et al. 1997; De Graaf et al. 2002; Hamilton, 2003; Gardner et al. 2004). Of course, there is a wide range of theoretical arguments and also some survey data that needs to be considered.

Baudrillard's (1970) "theory of consumption" substitutes a sociological interpretation for an economic one. Baudrillard argues that our notion of wellbeing and of needs are both derived from the "egalitarian political movement" of the past. He accepts that needs and utilities exist, but does not believe that consumption in our society is directed at fulfilling these needs.

What exists [according to Baudrillard], is a system of needs, as elements that are exchangeable, and constitute a global disponibility for consumption. The objects of consumption are substitutable, since they function according to the social logic, as signs. Therefore, there can never be satisfaction of a need, as little as hysteria or a psychosomatic disease can be cured by treating a symptom. The world of objects and needs are that of a generalised hysteria. This implies that consumption as it functions in our society does not lead to enjoyment. Consumption is a function of production, and excludes enjoyment.

(Otnes on Baudrillard 1988)

Erich Fromm (1979) has suggested that the choice for those living in affluent societies is simple: "To have or to be?" Consumers will either strive for satisfaction from a continuous process of purchasing consumer goods; or, alternatively, will measure their lives according to the quality of their experiences, not the quantity of their consumption (Pausacker 1981). The problem with the self-centred "having" world is that social status and personal satisfaction are achieved solely through the accumulation of possessions. Hence, once the individual satisfaction derived from a consumer purchase evaporates, so does personal happiness. Thus, the process starts afresh, and accumulation continues. The conserver or "being" world offers an alternative, and is far from a new phenomenon. Conservers, as Pausacker (1981) claims, are those that are minimalist by nature and have an empathy with the natural environment. Consumer products are still accumulated, but care is taken to minimise usage of non-renewable resources and minimise waste (ibid.). Over twenty years ago Pausacker (1981) believed that early signs of conservatism were already evident.

Indeed, there is a growing body of Australians who already have shunned consumerism and are fast approaching the ideals of conservatism. Nevertheless, we will need time to change, and

even on the most sanguine estimates we would expect a thorough-going consumer-to-conserver transition to take many decades.

(Pausacker 1981)

However, we have not yet arrived at a post-materialist Australia. Indeed, consumption expenditure figures alone point to a robust and satisfied consumer society and media and business interests often seem to inhibit shifts away from self-gratifying material accumulation (Sanne 1998).

Nevertheless, evidence does point to a readiness among consumers to accept changes in consumption behaviour. A recent US survey showed that 88 per cent either agree or strongly agree that most people buy and consume far more than is needed. Seventy-seven per cent stated that they could choose to buy and consume less than they do (Sanne 1998). Having said this, the study also shows a strong ambivalence to consumption. Americans may agree that the way we live produces too much waste (93 per cent) but only 51 per cent said they would be ready to admit that their own buying habits have a negative effect on the environment. Consumers may condemn materialism in society but also attach a strong importance to it for need satisfaction, and hence, value it in their lives. Similarly, surveys of youth consumption patterns (UNESCO 2000; Bentley 2001) have uncovered a lack of understanding by young people of how their consumption choices affect the world around them. The sustainable consumption survey conducted for this project has explored many of these issues (See Chapter 3).

A Swedish survey points to a "rational" approach to consumption by many consumers. It found that many consumers thought that some major consumer goods in their homes were not needed (Sanne 1998). Also, movements for decreased working hours and increased leisure time in the West are often associated with post-materialist thinking (see Gorz; Sanne). But whether "downshifting" as it is known – working and earning less – is really a realistic consideration for young people in Australia is difficult to gauge. Young people are generally either still part of the formal education sector or are only just starting out in their chosen career. What is clear, however, is that consumers are becoming increasingly disillusioned by the consumer society and are seeking out alternative lifestyles, often characterised by less work and more leisure time. Indeed, this is also the case for many young Australians (see Section 3.2.3).

Hamilton's (2003) work on downshifting in Australia is the most authoritative of its sort to date. He contests that the costs of overconsumption in Australia should not be overlooked any further. "Consumer debt and

personal bankruptcies are rising rapidly. Australians are working longer and harder than they have for decades and neglecting their families and their health as a result. So while they say they do not have enough money, many Australians also say that money-hunger conflicts with their deeper values and preferences. When asked whether Australian society today is too materialistic, with too much emphasis on money and not enough on the things that really matter, 83 per cent agree.” (Hamilton 2003).

The study by Hamilton into Australians who “downshift” is both timely and very interesting. There appears to be an increasing trend to downshift in more recent years. In fact, 23 per cent of the adults (30–59 years) surveyed said they had downshifted over the past 10 years. People had downshifted for a myriad of reasons, although to spend more time with family and the desire for a healthier and more balanced lifestyle were the major factors cited. Also, downshifters are generally happy with their decisions. But some do miss the extra income that they had forfeited (Hamilton 2003).

While downshifting itself represents a rejection of the common preoccupation with money and material acquisition, few downshifters nominated the two explicitly post-materialist reasons as their primary motivation, i.e. a less materialistic lifestyle and a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. However, it is fair to assume that, among the complex of reasons for making the change, severing the bonds of materialism is important.

(Hamilton 2003).

Since 1993, according to a consumer research survey “Eye on Australia” (Information Australia 2001), consumers have shown an increasing dislike to the act of shopping. Nowadays, only half the population say they like shopping while 44 per cent say they disliked shopping centres. In fact, shopping centres are losing their appeal for young people as well. The survey found that 42 per cent of 18–34-year-olds saw shopping centres as a “turn-off” and did not like spending time in them (Information Australia 2001).

There have also been indications of dissatisfaction with company actions and heightened concerns about the amount of, and content of, advertising in Australian society. Nine in ten Australian consumers say that if they can see companies behaving in a decent and ethical way, they are more likely to buy from them and they will support companies they know are funding charities or community programs (ibid.). Likewise, Moisander (1998) has observed that consumption choices respond strongly to personal morals or ethics.

## 2.3 Toward sustainable consumption

### 2.3.1 Sustainable consumption defined

Clearly the roots of sustainable consumption lie in theories of post-materialism. And although the need for changing consumption patterns has been discussed in international circles for quite some time, it was not until its inclusion in the Agenda 21 action plan for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit that many governments took much notice. Nowadays, sustainable consumption is considered a major theme of sustainable development (Barber 2001).

The three immediate goals of sustainable consumption reflect the unequal world in which we all reside:

- 1) **Less:** Radical reduction of aggregate material throughput in developed economies.
- 2) **More:** Sustainable economic development in developing countries that responds to needs.
- 3) **Ethical:** Changes in global patterns of consumption, based on re-considered values and cultural practices in the North (developed economies, including Australia); access and redistribution in the South (developing economies). (Manoochehri 2001)

A number of common features may be identified in definitions of sustainable consumption (Fien 2000). These include an emphasis on:

- satisfying basic human needs (not the desire for “wants” and luxuries);
- privileging quality of life concerns over material standards of living;
- minimising resource use, waste and pollution;
- taking a life-cycle perspective in consumer decision-making; and
- acting with concern for future generations.

These five emphases feature in the definition that has come to be seen as one of the most authoritative in recent years. This is the definition proposed by the 1994 Oslo Symposium on Sustainable Consumption, which sees sustainable consumption as:

... the use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations.

(Norwegian Ministry of the Environment 1994)

This definition, and others like it (see Stern 1997; Costanza 1991), is quite comprehensive. They link sustainable consumption closely with sustainable production by dealing with the use of natural resources both in the production and disposal phases of the product life-cycle as well as during the actual consumption of goods and services. They also assume an iterative process through which producers can influence consumption through product designs and marketing with consumers, in turn, influencing production through their market choices.

Of all of the aspects of sustainable consumption, arguments over quality of life and consumer lifestyles are probably the most important. Prior to 1999, a lot of work on sustainable consumption avoided the connection of consumption with quality of life and sought to define alternative models rather than embracing consumption and economic activity and understanding its purpose. Economists would define this as “maximising utility” whereas in more general terms it may be referred to as “enhancing the quality of life” (Manoochehri 2001). In fact, sustainable consumption does provide a framework for achieving improved quality of life. The 1998 UNDP Human Development Report notes:

Consumption can contribute much to human development but to deliver its potential it must be shared, strengthening, socially responsible and sustainable.

(Jolly 1998)

Sustainable consumption is certainly about the quality of life. Economic consumption, as Manoochehri (2001) puts it, “is optimal only insofar as it improves the quality of life for individual consumers and for society as a whole”.

The [...] focus of sustainable consumption [is] more on the quality ... of consumption and less on the quantity.

(Robins et al. 1998)

From a policy development point of view practical guidelines are also now available to help identify specific policies for different governments, including a new training kit developed by Consumers International and UNEP (see Chapter 6). Sustainable consumption policies can take the form of economic instruments, recycling and reusing programs, education and information activities, consumer research, and new technology and sustainable product development. Importantly, however, little, if anything, has been proposed in Australia on optimising quality of life over the demands of consumerism. This is perhaps due to embedded paradigms of growth, and the supremacy of economic indicators that measure our wealth as a nation (e.g. GDP).

### 2.3.2 Sustainable consumption on the international stage

In the past decade the “consumption and production patterns” agenda has clearly switched from discussion and non-integrated initiatives to a drive for policy implementation and progress monitoring.

A range of actors are involved, including governments, NGOs, industry, academia and international organisations such as the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Policy implementation at the national level has been disappointing (UNEP 2002). Amongst the most widespread are initiatives focusing on reuse and recycling, eco-design, eco-labelling and certification programs, product testing by consumer groups and awareness-raising campaigns. Countries like Mauritius, India, Senegal, Chile, and Indonesia have launched awareness-raising campaigns on issues such as energy and water saving, waste recycling and sustainable transport, but little else. Nevertheless, a recent survey found that 82 per cent of countries surveyed had implemented some form of recycling practices (UNEP 2002).

Some countries have begun to introduce environmentally sensitive fiscal policies, including eco-taxation and subsidy reform. Extended producer responsibility requirements are now enforced in various countries, including at least eight in Asia. In these cases producers are required to take back packaging and sometimes entire products such as automobiles and electronic equipment, promoting waste minimisation. Consumers themselves have been responsible for some of the developments. Consumer power continues to encourage government policy development and industry action. But consumers, particularly young consumers, need the right legal and social conditions in which to bring about change (see Chapter 6).

International studies into consumer trends and behavioural elements continue to proliferate. UNEP has co-ordinated research into youth and global consumer segments and also on sustainable consumption indicators in recent years. The joint UNEP and UNESCO “Is the Future Yours?” research project studied the consumption patterns and lifestyles of over 10,000 young people in 24 countries (see Chapter 3). The advertising and communication industry has also supported investigations into youth consumption patterns.

In response to an acknowledgment of the importance of protecting consumers from environmental catastrophes, the UN General Assembly (1999) expanded the general UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection to include sustainable consumption.

However, the greatest advancement of sustainable consumption principles since the inclusion of sustainable consumption in the Agenda 21 document was the endorsement by all countries at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 to encourage sustainable consumption through a special ten-year framework of multi-country programs. The 3rd Chapter of the World Summit's Plan of Implementation document encourages all countries to:

... promote the development of a 10-year framework of programs in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems by addressing and, where appropriate, delinking economic growth and environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes, and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste.

(UN 2002)

Education for sustainable consumption is also beginning to be recognised through research, education programs and policy. For instance, UNESCO has recently included sustainable consumption in its list of core themes to address for its Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014). In Australia, the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage's Environmental Education Section is undertaking a range of activities such as the Sustainable Schools Initiative that teach sustainable consumption principles (see Section 4.3.3 for more information on these DEH activities). In addition, other major international policy and research initiatives have sprouted in recent years including the international Sustainable Consumption Network that brings together research institutions, international NGO's and the United Nations.

### 2.3.3 Sustainable consumption and production in Australia

As a signatory to the revised UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection and the new international Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (Johannesburg 2002), Australia has accepted a responsibility to promote sustainable consumption.

There is no doubting the progress made by the Australian Government on a number of sustainable consumption issues in recent years. The first global audit of sustainable consumption policy efforts by national governments (UNEP 2002) found that Australia scored well in all of the ten policy categories reviewed. Australia was only one of eight countries invited to prepare a sustainable consumption case study for the UNEP report. However, a more comprehensive review of the national surveys has since discovered that Australia's record is not quite as positive as originally believed. Australia received a score of five out of ten, and ranked equal ninth out of 52 countries (Bentley 2003). While the Government had made respectable progress in providing information on resource-saving measures and implemented recycling programs, little had been done to measure national progress toward sustainable consumption or incorporate sustainable consumption regulations into existing consumer protection legislation (Bentley 2003). The review also acknowledged the lack of research into ways of changing consumer behaviour and the deficiency of youth specific activities.

Australia has a conservationist tradition from which many of the sustainable consumption policies that exist today can be traced. Pausacker explained the need for "conserver" values in his 1981 book *Living Better With Less*. Fifteen years later the Australian Government's major publication *More With Less* (1996) looked at initiatives that had been taken to reorient consumption toward sustainability. The report also discussed some of the key techniques for influencing consumption patterns. These largely mirror the policy categories included in the UN sustainable consumption guidelines (information, education, incentives, new products, etc.). However, the strategies for action fall short of encouraging lifestyle changes as well as educating and empowering young people to bring about lifestyle changes in the wider community.

Although the UNEP study found some weaknesses in Australia's current position on sustainable consumption, the Australian Government's progress in adopting sustainable production ("supply-side") measures was described in detail. The researchers acknowledged in the Australian Case Study the wide variety of existing programs for sustainable production such as the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) Eco-efficiency Agreements. Eco-efficiency Agreements are innovative partnerships between the Australian Government and Australian industry associations that help their members improve business efficiency while reducing their impact on the environment, through better resource use and waste minimisation. In April 2001, the Government released the publication *Product*

*Innovation – The Green Advantage: An Introduction to Design for Environment for Australian Business.* The booklet encourages manufacturers to reduce environmental impacts at each stage in the life cycle of their products and hence increase the availability of innovative and environmentally-sustainable products. The Government also recently completed a project to introduce life cycle assessment techniques into the Australian construction industry. Project outcomes include a dedicated LCA web site (<http://buildlca.rmit.edu.au>) that includes a series of LCA case studies, and a draft framework for collecting and reporting LCA data specific to the construction industry (UNEP–CI 2002).

Consumer oriented labelling schemes such as the Energy rating system and the recently launched Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme (WELS) are examples of attempts by the Australian Government to assist consumers to make better purchasing choices. The aim of WELS is to encourage the uptake of water efficient products and appliances in domestic and commercial areas while maintaining individual choice and accounting for regional variations in water supply in urban Australia. In November 1996, the Australian and New Zealand Environment Conservation Council (ANZECC) endorsed the National Government Waste Reduction and Purchasing Guidelines. Progress against these Guidelines was reviewed in 1998. ANZECC members agreed to undertake a range of actions to maximise their contribution to the achievement of national waste reduction, by ensuring that their own agencies work towards the agreed waste minimisation targets, including through appropriate purchasing policies, cleaner production and recycling.<sup>1</sup>

Sustainable consumption and sustainable production measures are clearly intertwined, and should be considered complementary approaches for achieving sustainability (see Section 6.2.2). But within new integrated measures there is a need for increased emphasis on demand-side processes such as education for sustainable consumption (see Sections 4.2.1 and 4.3.3) to complement the supply-side policies of sustainable production.

### 2.3.4 Changing consumption patterns

Changing unsustainable aspects of consumer demand requires action at many levels. Certainly, action is needed to encourage a reconsideration of the consumer choices of individuals and households and the values and attitudes that lie behind them. These include common assumptions about personal identity, social wellbeing and quality of life. It also requires reconsideration by individuals, families and communities of what it means to live a happy and abundant life within the limits of the Earth's natural

resources and according to the principles of intra- and inter-generational equity. This need led the World Conservation Union (IUCN), in conjunction with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and UNEP, to suggest an ethic for living sustainably. This was based upon values such as respecting the close relationships between meeting basic human needs, the biodiversity and independence of nature, and the importance of consuming responsibly by “living more lightly” on the Earth (IUCN, WWF and UNEP 1992).

However, changes at the levels of individual, family and, even, community values are not enough to achieve sustainable consumption. Actions by governments such as providing an appropriate policy framework of supporting social and economic instruments – including eco-labelling schemes, tax and pricing incentives, appropriate energy and water supply infrastructure, policing infringements of environmental codes, and modelling sustainable consumption priorities in their own purchasing departments – are also needed. This requires a whole-systems approach to economic and social policy in which the micro-economic influences on households and businesses are integrated with the macro-influences of the structure of the economy in order to produce the desired level of sustainable consumption (OECD 1997).

Michaelis' (2000) approach for changing consumption patterns clearly demonstrates the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable consumption. He suggests action should be taken in the following six areas:

- **Demographics:** Demographic stability will likely make consumption patterns more sustainable. Migration might be curbed by improving domestic educational opportunities, especially for girls, in the poorest regions, developing better health care and social services, and other policies that contribute to economic development and community empowerment and stability.
- **Economic and Institutional Frameworks:** The economic framework helps to shape consumption patterns. Current measurements of economic wellbeing such as Gross Domestic Product need to be replaced with other social measures. Further examination is also needed of the social costs of using personal credit to stimulate consumption.
- **Technological Innovation:** Technology is an important vehicle for achieving sustainability. But R&D at both corporate levels and national levels are generally focused on economic returns rather than sustainability. New national and international sustainable technology programs are needed.

<sup>1</sup> This information was provided by staff from the Department of the Environment and Heritage.

- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure development needs to be managed sustainably. This includes reducing parking provision in cities, shifting transport to non-motorised options, and encouraging more green spaces in and around cities.
- **Narrative and Symbol:** Many forms of art, expression and communication help to shape culture. Producers of TV dramas, musicians, politicians and advertisers need to be enrolled in the effort to improve the status and attraction of sustainable lifestyles.
- **Shifting Alliances:** More research is needed to understand how linkages between governments, industries, science and technology, the press, media and other agents, shape and influence consumption patterns.

Government actions to influence the lifestyles of citizens – as policies to encourage sustainable consumption inevitably do – are sometimes considered “challenging” (OECD 1997). Policies that seek to affect the values and lifestyles of citizens through formal education pose particular difficulties. The spectre of “social engineering” and “indoctrination” are concerns for teachers and parents who favour balanced perspectives. This means that particular care is needed to disseminate professionally ethical ways of bringing about desired social changes through schools.

A similar magnitude of challenge would seem to confront efforts to change the levels and nature of consumption of young people (and the wider adult community). This challenge relates to the dominance of materialism and consumerism in contemporary global culture. Indeed, mass consumption is now entrenched as one of the key defining processes of economic and social life. On the economic front, demand side strategies are now of equal or greater importance than production orientated ones in many national policies; indeed, it has been said that contemporary economies are characterised by the primacy of consumption over production (Miller 1995). On the social front, everyday life today is very much a material one. Indeed, “social life is largely made possible by material objects, and their manufacture, exchange and consumption provides the framework and means of most forms of social interaction and cultural interchange” (Clammer 1997). However, as well as being a means of creating wealth, satisfying personal needs, and forming and maintaining social networks, consumerism – and the values that owning and “displaying” different products signify – is also one of the chief ways through which individuals establish a personal identity and present themselves to others: “One’s body, clothes, speech, leisure pastimes, eating and drinking preferences, home, car, choice of holidays, etc. are to be regarded

as indicators of individuality of taste and sense of style of the owner/consumer” (Featherstone 1991). However, Karl Marx observed that human relations were hidden behind the relations between things. He argued that people falsely identify their real material interests with the market and commodities, with consumption.

Unable to grasp that the association of working people in their battle with nature, i.e. the social relations among people, are expressed in exchange, commodity fetishism considers the exchangeability of commodities an internal, natural property of the commodities themselves. In other words, that which is in reality a relationship among people, appears as a relation among things within the context of commodity fetishism.

(Bogdanov 1920, cited in Rubins 1928)

Educational programs and community campaigns to promote sustainable consumption are a challenge to one of the central driving forces of contemporary economic and social life. However, this very centrality of consumerism contains the roots of democratic social change. Today, many goods and services have been developed from a constructive critique of consumerism and have come to signify ethical social and environmental lifestyle choices. Many examples of this were provided in the 1998 OECD report on member country initiatives towards sustainable consumption, and include examples of changing and improving products and services and changing patterns of household, government and corporate consumption. Such developments have led one commentator to conclude that “late twentieth century consumerism contains within it far more revolutionary seeds than we have hitherto anticipated” (Nava 1991, cited in Morgan 1997).

A key priority for policy-makers seeking to continue this progress is to identify the driving forces of sustainable consumption and to promote initiatives that can catalyse the synergies between them. Writing in the Australian context, Fien and Skoien (2000) cite: local and national government policies and examples: the priorities of manufacturers and providers of services; levels of technology; the media and advertising industries; the relative prices of goods and services and the costs of alternatives; the level of public infrastructure; the standard and priorities of education systems; the availability of consumer and environmental information; and the strength of civil society as key drivers. An important point to note is that these driving forces are interrelated. This means, for example, that personal lifestyle choices can evolve in relation to the influences of all the others. It is here – as a complement to wider government policies and

as a strategy for engendering public and corporate understanding and support – that the empowerment of young people can be brought to bear as change agents to advance sustainable consumption.

## 2.4 Young people and sustainable consumption

### 2.4.1 Youth defined

I was ordered to keep close to the long-boat, that in case of bad weather we might be taken into her. And do you know what I thought? I thought I would part company as soon as I could. I wanted to have my first command all to myself. I wasn't going to sail in a squadron if there were a chance of independent cruising. I would make land by myself. I would beat the other boats. Youth! All Youth! The silly, charming, beautiful youth.

Joseph Conrad in *Youth* (1925)

“Youth” is often defined as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. In other words youth can be seen as a social group that is between childhood and adulthood. For that reason, the youth group is probably the most fragmented social group in society. A common Australian dictionary defines youth as the “period between childhood and old age”. It also associated it with “vigour, enthusiasm, inexperience, and other characteristics of this period” (Moore in Manning and Ryan 2004).

Social research and policy-making institutions in Australia generally refer to all people aged between 12 and 25 years as being young people. However, the age range varies in many circumstances in Australia and in other countries. For instance, the NSW Government and National Youth Week define young people as those aged over 12 years of age and under 25 years of age. The Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies and the Australian Medical Association both extend the lower limit of the age range to 10 years, whereas the United Nations defines youth in demographic terms as being aged from 15 to 24 years. At the same time many UN agencies refer to young people being those aged between 10 and 24. Various youth parliaments and organisations in other countries extend the upper limit for youth to 28, 30 and sometimes even 35 years.

This study has followed norms set in mainstream youth policy circles by selecting 12 years as the lower age limit, and has chosen 28 years as the upper limit – slightly above the more common youth age limit of 25 years – in order to include experiences of a broad range of young professionals and more mature consumers.

### 2.4.2 Influences on youth consumption patterns

Over the last decade, there has been an exponential increase in the intensity that manufacturers employ to sell their stuff to the young. Today's teens are victims of the contemporary luxury economy. They have grown up in the age of the brand, bombarded and defined by name products and intrusive and clever advertising strategies. Raised by a commodity culture from the cradle, teen's dependably fragile self-images and their need to belong to groups are perfect qualities for advertisers to exploit.

Alissa Quart in *Branded* (2003)

As Michaelis (2000) points out, it is impossible to identify a “single-driver model” of consumption because material consumption is linked to almost every other aspect of our lives. For instance, consumption patterns are related to economic development, technological change, institutions, landscapes, demographic distributions, education systems, communication systems, and cultures. He identifies a few influences on consumption that are particularly powerful. These “mechanisms shaping consumption” include:

- **Demographic, economic and technological change:** Demographic change can shape consumption patterns in affluent countries like Australia. New immigrants are likely to assume the consumption lifestyles of those around them, while as children become “youth” they will independently seek out new goods and services for the first time. Modern economics, along with constant technological (product) advancement, encourages consumption on many levels. Availability of personal credit and the expectation of rising incomes forever help feed a “cycle of work and spend” (Schor 1998). Young Australians are increasingly being caught up in this vicious cycle (SMH 2003).
- **The physical world: resources, time and infrastructure:** As the scarcity of natural resources in both Australia and overseas becomes more evident, we will likely witness a transformation from labour productivity to resource productivity. But modern economic development has traditionally focused on knowledge and creativity rather than on labour and resources. Thus, Australian workers are facing increased demands on their time, and are being compensated by rapid income growth, enticing them to spend further. Infrastructure is a crucial enabler for consumption growth.

Presently, communications infrastructure is booming, leading to new consumption growth areas such as mobile communications products. In fact, already over half of young Australians own a mobile phone. Sustainable lifestyles can be encouraged if appropriate infrastructure is made available. For example, an upgrade in Australia's public transport system may entice more young commuters off the roads.

- **Motivation, need, habit and compulsion:** The question of why people consume is far from one-dimensional. After basic needs have been catered for, new consumption drivers set in. Max-Neef (1991) emphasised the distinction between needs and “satisfiers”, claiming that sometimes we might try to use ineffective satisfiers to meet particular needs – for example, addressing feelings of loneliness by eating or shopping. This statement seems consistent with theories of consumption and personal identity. In a consumer society, material goods are one way that we can express our own identity or individuality, and obtain membership of social groups. Young people are especially vulnerable as they strive to carve out an identity from their parents, siblings and peers. Habitual decision-making is another powerful consumption driver, for young and older consumers alike (Rousseau 1755; Schor 1998; Wilk 1999). A desire for luxury goods often requires an abandonment of lower quality (and often less resource-intensive) goods. However, what were once deemed a luxury rapidly become habit, and then need.
- **Social structure, identity, discourse and symbol:** The structure of modern society also impacts on consumption patterns. People are often shaped by what they see around them and many will pursue lifestyles that seem glamorous and presently unobtainable (Schor 1998). However, some individuals can shape the consumption patterns of others, such as young people in the context of family shopping behaviour. But the most controversial of influences on consumption patterns, especially for young people (see Klein 2000; Lasn 2000; Quart 2003), are those of mass communication. Advertising shapes the consumption patterns of young Australians. The frequent repetition of symbols and value statements are designed to become integral parts of mainstream culture and thought.

Fien and Skoien outlined the demand-side and supply-side factors influencing youth consumption patterns in Australia for a UNESCO conference on

sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles in Paris in 2000. The broad categories they identified were:

#### **Demand-side factors –**

- cultural and historical values;
- political and socio-economic factors;
- knowledge factors; and
- socio-psychological factors.

#### **Supply-side factors –**

- consumer culture and advertising;
- media and mass marketing in schools;
- green marketing; and
- national public policies.

Just as Michaelis' (2000) discusses societal structures that drive consumption, Fien and Skoien explore the cultural factors in Australia that have shaped a materialistic society. They argue that rapid economic development since the 1950's and high employment has fuelled consumption. Many families have a car for every person over 17 years of age, because of irregular and expensive public transportation and the long distances between housing and workplaces. In addition, immense water consumption has been common for washing cars and watering gardens. However, as a sign of things to come, water restrictions have been unveiled in some major cities. Over 80 per cent of Australians live in suburbs of the ten major cities. As Fien and Skoien state “the materialism behind the suburban imperatives helps to explain the strong drive in Australians to seek “in group” approval and status – even though pursuing these goals is not only economically expensive but also very costly in resource and energy use”. This suburban lifestyle also helps explain why Australians are often confused about environmental and social realities that exist outside of the major cities.

Australia's materialistic “ethos” as Fien and Skoien call it, is starting to make way for a new “ecological ethos” that advocates conserver rather than consumer values. Australia's recent history of rapid economic advancement has demoralised many and young people, in particular, are calling for change. The political landscape has not yet changed dramatically, although some signs of change are evident. For instance, around 10–15 per cent of people vote for “green” or similar parties in most elections (see Section 3.2.3).

Governments often cite the need to raise awareness about environmental issues. However, people may already be aware of the need for energy and other conservation practices, but may lack knowledge on how to take action. Therefore, people need education to help them develop the critical capacities and the action competence necessary to act on their awareness (Fien and Skoien 2000). As a

result, Fien and Skoien argue, “government programs are not very successful, unless they are accompanied by a range of cross-sectoral policies and legislation which provide a supportive context for people to act on the lessons of education programs”.

Young adults’ identification with popular culture through mass media is arguably the most significant influence on young people’s consumption. Books highlighting the problem of youth “branding” and corporate greed, including *Branded* and *No Logo*, have become best-sellers. Clearly, the negative picture painted of the evasive buying and selling of teenagers by Alissa Quart, author of *Branded*, is compelling, and at times shocking. The average Australian will, every week, watch about six hours of television commercials. By the end of high school, most teenagers will have absorbed at least 350,000 TV ads, and as they move into adulthood they will face more than 3,000 marketing messages each day (Information Australia 2001). A major Hong Kong study into media consumption of young adults found youth watched on average 2–3 hours of television per day (HK Government 2002). The sheer amount of advertising means it is difficult to escape for even the most strong-minded young people.

According to American epidemiologist Michael Dawson, “despite what neoclassical economists may tell us, people do not have an inherent, insatiable desire to consume without end. Rather, the desire to possess and consume must be created” (Dawson 2003). Dawson argues that big business encourages conspicuous consumption and cunningly ensnares its victims. Dawson challenges consumer culture theorists to come clean about their stated aims and contends that the “writings of corporate marketing specialists themselves show that they are quite frank about their purpose: to generate profit by manipulating people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviours”.

Young people are tricked and coerced into certain lifestyles by corporate advertising. Companies spend billions of dollars each year to market products to children and young people and to recruit trendspotters, who help advertisers develop and sell products. This calculated method for involving young people only further encourages more spending. Young people in affluent societies are spending less time studying and socialising with friends and more time shopping and working to save money for future consumption (see Quart 2003). However, there is also evidence in Australia about the disapproval of the shopping experience and mass marketing (see Information Australia 2001). The comments of one young person in *Branded* are particularly striking: “You know what you’re supposed to be wearing. You

see it on TV. They advertise on the busses: Levi’s, FuBu. You’ve got to wear that gear to be in the in-crowd. Yeah it’s twisted. Clothes are very important at my school”. (Quart 2003).

The increase of media and mass marketing in Australian schools is also making it more difficult for young people to avoid messages to consume. A number of schools in Australia have allowed corporations to “brand” their school environments or offer products (e.g. fast food retailers) to students on special occasions.

A growing number of schools are sponsored by corporations. Teenagers not only play ball in gyms trimmed with logos but also spend their English classes coming up with advertising slogans for sponsors, all under the auspices of their so-called public high schools. One hundred and fifty school districts in twenty-nine States [in the US] have Pepsi and Coke contracts. Textbooks regularly mention Orco cookies, and math problems contain Nike logos.

(Quart 2003)

Although in a less pervasive way, peer pressure and role models also play a part in influencing youth consumption. Quart (2003) discusses at length the emergence of “peer-to-peer” marketing. Parents and other family members also influence teenage consumption, albeit to a lesser extent. New research in Australia has found that young people are concerned by peer pressure (Mission Australia 2003). According to other studies, parents and friends remain the major influences on young people’s opinions, followed by teachers/lecturers, then other relatives. However, it is unlikely that parental control and advice would be enough to direct young people’s lifestyles toward sustainability, particularly if their parents lead a life of materialism.

Some research in other countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland) is currently underway to try and better understand the role the media plays in encouraging sustainable consumption and shaping consumer ideologies in areas such as IT (see Wilska et al. 2003). The Hong Kong Youth Media Consumption Survey (2002) makes a very valid recommendation: “Given the large amount of time young people spend on media activities, the media can be an important vehicle for delivering educational materials to young people. We recommend that the media be asked to take up more social responsibility for educating young people” (HK Government 2002).

We need to make sustainable life-styles fashionable and “cool” as young people might say. We also need to make it clear that there are

real, personal benefits to living in harmony with the planet.

(Toepfer 2000)

### 2.4.3 Society's change agents

Youth culture has become the conscience of the modern world. It studies environmental degradation, deforestation, salinisation, worldwide pollution, global warming, extinction of animal and plant species, loss of biodiversity, and asks, why is this happening?

David Tacey in *The Spirituality Revolution* (2003)

Young people are not only vulnerable to the vast changes brought on by the consumer society, but can also be the key change agents in society (Oxfam 2002). Despite this, young people are often ignored both in the literature and in the realm of political decision-making. According to Segger (1999), "Young adults occupy a potentially significant position in Australian society. In particular, they are in a position to influence and impact upon the environment as citizens, and in the decisions which shape their consumption patterns and lifestyles".

Young people are considered a critical target group in the drive to reorient consumption patterns toward sustainability. Young people represent a large proportion of total consumption expenditure in affluent societies, including Australia, and these young consumers possess substantial power over the market – something young people are often unaware of. Industry experts estimate the size of combined youth spending power in eleven major economies including Australia to be in excess of 750 billion dollars (US) (Brown 2002). Australian young people spend a large proportion of their money on leisure goods and activities. Clothes, food, entertainment and communications equipment are among the most popular. As far back as the mid-1990s, Australians under the age of 18 were spending an estimated \$31.60 each week (Beder 1997). Today, teenagers in Australia lead the world in mobile telephone use, with 45 per cent of 13 to 15-year-olds owning a mobile. Young Australians spend around 13 per cent of their disposable incomes on mobile products (MobileYouth, 2004).

In the past, the majority of learning of any significance took place in the form of transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. This vertical socialisation still is a cornerstone in most societies, but today the learning process has become more complex. A significant amount of socialisation and cultural transfers take place in the form of a horizontal process between children and young people, within their own country as well as between countries.

More recently, however, a new dimension of socialisation has emerged. In certain fields, the adult community receives so much important input from children and young people that the traditional learning process has been reversed (Norwegian Government 1999). There are several reasons for this. Young people in Australia today spend a longer time on their education, and are older than earlier generations when entering the workforce and when starting a family. This freedom from responsibility makes them less bound by convention, more open to alternatives and quick to pick up emerging ideas. Young people serve as antennas picking up signals too faint for adults to notice. This applies to a number of areas, including gender equality, opposition to violence and racism, involvement in the environment and human rights, new trends in fashion and music, and especially in relation to the new media.

... it is perhaps more important than ever to secure and facilitate participation in society by children and young people. Children and young people today represent new resources and they are agents of change. How this potential is to be utilised is largely up to the adults.

(Norwegian Government 1999)

As influential members of many households, more open to change and as future decision-makers themselves, young people need to be empowered, educated and informed of ways in which they can act as agents of change in relation to sustainable consumption. As the United Nations Environment Programme argues:

Young people have a critical role to play in shaping the environment and helping to deliver a less poverty-riven world now, and in the future. Young people are some of the biggest consumers of goods such as mobile phones, computers and other electronic equipment. This is a growing area of concern, especially in developing countries where a great deal of this so-called "E-waste" can end up. So the consumption patterns of the young are crucial in our push to deliver sustainable development.

(UNEP 2000)

UNESCO and UNEP have identified young people as being instrumental for achieving global sustainable consumption patterns. They argue:

- young people aged under 20 years make up 40 per cent of the world's population;
- young people make up a distinct consumer category and hence require a specific approach;
- young people directly or indirectly influence a large portion of family consumption;

- young people are more open to change; and
- the consumption patterns young people acquire today will influence their consumption patterns in their adult life and that of their children.

However, whether young Australians would accept major lifestyle changes is yet to be resolved. Fien and Skoien identify three socio-psychological factors that indicate that young people have great potential for changing consumption patterns. First, they have high levels of concern for the environment (see Chapter 3). Second, young people may be able to make sustainable consumption “fashionable”. This is because being part of a group is important to young people. In other words, defining trendsetters and change agents for sustainable livelihoods may broaden the appeal to other youth. Also the extended period of “youth”, allows for a prolonged timeframe to explore a range of lifestyle patterns, including sustainable options. Third, young people in Australia are highly media literate, which may, to some degree, offset the influence of their immersion in consumer culture. They have daily exposure to a wide range of mass media that play an important role in promoting and reinforcing consumer values. However, rather than being passive recipients of media culture, young people demonstrate high levels of media literacy and routinely reconstruct media messages (Hopkins 1995 in Fien et al. 2000). Indeed, it is important to explore young people’s views on sustainable consumption to gauge the accuracy of these claims.

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# 3 Young people's views

## 3.1 Introduction

Young people from all over Australia had the opportunity to provide their views on their consumption patterns, the influences on these patterns, and the barriers to and enablers for practicing sustainability. Concepts such as consumerism, post-materialism and sustainable consumption were central to many of these consultations.

The views of young Australians on these matters have been sourced in four ways:

1. A review of related literature from several countries (Section 3.2).
2. A survey of young people conducted between November 2003 and April 2004 (Section 3.3).
3. Consultations during five sustainable consumption workshops held in Sydney, Bendigo, Adelaide, the Mornington Peninsula and Brisbane in 2003 and 2004 (Section 3.4).
4. Face-to-face discussions organised with young people and key youth representatives from community and government organisations participating in a capacity building program for sustainable consumption change agents in Australia (Section 3.5).

## 3.2 Youth views in the literature

Topics such as consumer behaviour, consumerism

and sustainable consumption are not treated as prime focus areas in youth journals or by youth study associations in Australia. An extensive review of the literature as well as of community and government programs unearthed relatively few materials associated directly with sustainable consumption. For instance, the South Australian Office for Youth's discussion paper on young people and sustainable consumption (2001) and the conference paper by Fien and Skoien (2000) are the most authoritative pieces of work to date. However, a vast quantity of surveys and other literary sources have touched on related issues such as youth concern for the environment and social issues, and youth social participation. Information on sustainable consumption and young people is certainly referred to, albeit in a rather fragmented manner.

A number of recent surveys (UNEP–UNESCO 2000; ABS 2001; Loughland et al. 2002; BCA 2003; Government of Western Australia 2003, Manning and Ryan 2004) have portrayed a youth sector highly concerned about social issues such as the environment. In fact, many of the key concerns that stem from overconsumption in a developed economy such as Australia's are among the most talked about by young Australians. Many young Australians are unhappy and are not able to find fulfilment in material consumption. Although some of these young people are seeking out alternative, and often more

sustainable, lifestyles, many others lack the skills and opportunities to turn their concerns into direct action.

### 3.2.1 Australian research

Young people in Australia are a wide and varied group (e.g. see Bessant, Sercombe and Watts 1998), with a range of values, concerns and behaviours in terms of the environment and consumption. However, there are signs of an emerging environmentalism amongst young Australians (Fien and Skoien 2000). High levels of concern for social issues have been identified in a number of surveys of young Australians. The following review of Australian studies into youth values, tries to develop a picture of whether young Australians are willing, and ready, to accept lifestyle changes.

A decrease to 62 per cent in 2001 from 75 per cent (1992) of Australian's concerned about the environment was registered in a recent Australian Bureau of Statistics' study. (ABS 2001). But this trend far from heralds a change in overall concern for issues related to sustainable consumption, including the environment. Young people remained one of the age groups most concerned about the environment. Young people were also found to be the most likely to participate in a demonstration (10 per cent) or sign a petition (60 per cent). Unfortunately, the study into environmental concern by the ABS in the latest report in the series *Environmental Issues: People's Views and Practices*, typifies the misconception in Australian society of what constitutes environmental concern and environmental action. Clearly environmental action, in the same manner as other social action, encompasses more than just a willingness to attend meetings, sign petitions, write letters, and join demonstrations. Consumer action, for one, is not explored in this study.

However, the ABS study includes a review of the use of environmentally friendly products, fertilisers and pesticides. About half of Australians, according to the ABS study, regularly use refillable containers and recycled paper, and about 40 per cent either regularly or sometimes consumed organically grown food or vegetables (ABS 2001).

Households with dependent children are the most likely to buy environmentally friendly products. For example, more than half of such households buy recycled paper compared to only 43 per cent for single member households (ABS 2001). Young people clearly have a major impact on the purchasing decisions of a household (UNESCO 2000). The concerns of young people for issues such as poverty, animal rights and environment are

sometimes channelled into changes in household consumption behaviour.

A survey of over 11,000 people aged between 12 and 25 in Western Australia indicated young people care more about the environment than other high profile issues like drug and alcohol abuse, education, and health (WA Government 2003). The environment was the number one concern for young people in Western Australia. The findings showed that young people's concern for the environment increased as they got older. The more high-profile issues of recent times – terrorism, immigration and Australia's involvement in overseas conflicts – rated behind the more systemic and long-term issues such as the environment, crime and drug and alcohol abuse as issues of concern to the community. Interestingly, other issues such as poverty and health – both related to sustainable consumption – were also of concern to young Western Australians. Similarly, of the 830 young people surveyed during the 2001 Royal Adelaide Show, 530 stated protecting the planet was of high importance to them. This was the second most important issue after the need to find a job (Government of South Australia 2002).

As part of a major initiative to gather intelligence on Australia's future, the Business Council of Australia conducted a national consultation with 323 young people. The Survey was designed to capture the views and thoughts of youth on the future of Australia in 2025. The environment was by far the most important issue to respondents (BCA 2003). It ranked top or close to the top in all categories that reviewed present and future major concerns and challenges for Australia. There was also evidence of some concern for issues like income inequality and human rights. Consumption was not included as a response category. The individual environmental issues gaining most attention were logging, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, water conservation, and global warming. Suggestions made by young people for improving the environment avoided mention of consumer action, and rather cited the need for promoting greater awareness, encouraging eco-friendly technologies and reversing the damage to the environment (BCA 2003).

ImagineOz is a youth task force established as a follow-up to the 2001 National Conference of Young People. A survey conducted by ImagineOz found that 32.8 per cent of those surveyed believed Australia deals poorly with environmental protection; 78.8 per cent said that the environment was an important issue. Human rights (88 per cent) and education opportunities (90 per cent) were considered most important. Around two-thirds (64 per cent) of young

people thought that environmental protection was the biggest challenge facing Australia in the next 20 years. Environmental issues were viewed by young people as the main area where they could make a difference (63 per cent). However, social justice (20 per cent) and economics (34 per cent) were not considered as issues that were easy to influence for young Australians (ImagineOz 2002).

A National Youth Affairs Research Scheme study into youth and citizenship has found 82 per cent of young people surveyed consider the environment either important or very important to them. Consumption was not explored in the survey, however, and consumer action was considered only a “fairly common” form of social action. Although around half of young people had taken some consumer action in the past, only 40 per cent considered the actions they took to be effective or very effective (Manning and Ryan 2004).

The Australian component of a global UNESCO–UNEP youth study on consumption patterns, included responses from 191 young Australians aged between 18 and 25. The survey identified an appreciation by young Australians that their habits from travel to food consumption impacted on the environment, and to a lesser extent the whole of society (Moody 2000). The most critical current issues were global overpopulation, environment and human rights. Child labour and health were also considered very important. Young Australians do not believe that they are solely responsible for changing individual consumption choices and are also unaware of the link that their shopping behaviour has with societal problems. These conclusions were similar to those made by the global UNESCO study (see next section).

Some preliminary results from a large benchmark survey of the Environmental Knowledge, Values and Attitudes of 2,238 NSW school students, shows yet again that the environment is of major concern to young people. Approximately 90 per cent rank their environmental concern as high or very high. But interestingly, no major environmental issue rated as the most important issue to young people at the local, national or global level. Litter (local), crime (national), and war (global) were the major issues of concern. Nonetheless, environmental issues such as the ozone layer and loss of biodiversity rated very highly at the national and global levels (Loughland et al. 2002).

An important finding of this study was a clear indication that young people were taking individual action to help the environment (Loughland et al. 2002). This statement is reinforced by the fact that young people have little faith in environmental action by

governments and business. Education and information on sustainability is important. Schools were cited as key sources for learning about environmental issues. Even so, young people declared that they often were not clear on how to actually help the environment. Individual environmental issues that could be considered hard for young people to influence such as biodiversity loss and species extinction were those that young people have the most knowledge about. On the other hand, issues such as waste recycling – where direct action is possible – were not very well understood. If a clear link between shopping behaviour and environmental, health, animal rights and poverty issues can be established, young people will be able to realise a desire to “help” by making smarter personal consumption choices, and recycling and reusing where possible.

In a survey of over 5,500 young Australians aged 14–17 years, a majority of respondents were found not to understand the influence of social structures and institutions on shaping people's values and which also contribute to environmental problems (Sykes, Yencken, Fien and Choo 2000). Instead, Connell et al. (1999) recognised that Australian young people tend to use an “individualistic framework” to understand the causes of environmental problems. Yet, despite this individualistic framework, most young people did not appear to understand how their own behaviour contributed to environmental problems (Connell et al. 1999). This has been a conclusion from other minor studies (Moody 2000; Bentley 2001) and international surveys (UNESCO 2000).

### 3.2.2 International research

The trends in Australia are mostly emulated elsewhere in the world. A 2000 survey of young people in the USA found the main concerns to be: environmental protection (49 per cent); social health care provision for the uninsured (46 per cent); working to reduce racial tensions (46 per cent); and strengthening gun control laws (45 per cent). A survey in Britain captured a similar youth interest in social issues, or what has been categorised by Henn and Weinstein as “broadly post-materialist” issues. Young people ranked their concerns as:

1. Europe;
2. education (particularly the introduction of university fees);
3. militarism;
4. the environment;
5. civil liberties; and
6. solidarity with the Third World.

Interestingly, many of these issues that young people rate as important are ignored by political parties (Manning and Ryan 2004) and government institutions. The lack of youth participation in political debate could be a reason for perceived government inaction – and sometimes antithetical action – on these issues. However, the views of young people in Australia and in other countries have long been ignored by political establishments (Beresford and Phillip 1997). For example, in their television debates during the 2001 federal election, neither of the two prime-ministerial candidates mentioned young people in their arguments (Manning and Ryan 2004). However, governments are not alone in ignoring young people. The business sector listens most intently when marketing consumables, but not when considering social standards for their business. Indeed, most of Australia's leading 100 companies display little concern for the environment according to a new index measuring corporate social responsibility. Eighty-six per cent of companies performed poorly on the inaugural RepuTex index, which showed many companies still believed they had no role to play in protecting the environment (Reputation Measurement 2003).

Youth lifestyles, the environment and technology were the key focal areas of a European survey of 6,100 young people across 10 countries. The *Panda Bus Tour Survey 2000* found that the environment was important to over 90 per cent of respondents. Endangered animals (45 per cent), pollution (29 per cent), habitat destruction (22 per cent), and animal rights (20 per cent) were the main environmental concerns. Similarly to findings in Australia, a more tangible environmental issue, recycling, was considered important to only 13 per cent of respondents (WWF 2000). Young Europeans claim responsibility for environmental change with 64 per cent saying that everyone, including themselves, is responsible. Environmental organisations and charities are presently thought of as doing the most to protect the environment (57 per cent). Young people may not believe they are doing the best they can to protect the environment, and this could also be said about other social issues related to consumption behaviour. However, over half of the survey respondents believed that changing their lifestyles would be the best way to help the environment (WWF 2000). The need for changing personal lifestyles far outweighed other modes of individual action such as giving to charities, joining youth groups, writing to governments and sending petitions.

Importantly, however, younger respondents (under 20) were found to be less likely to think

that changing consumption is related to protecting the environment. The message here is clear. Young people are expressing concern about the world around them, but seem unclear on the extent to which their consumption affects society and nature.

In 2000, UNEP and UNESCO surveyed 10,000 young people (aged 18–25 years old) in 24 countries (including Australia). The project included case studies from Mexico, Canada, Thailand, Italy, Norway and Australia (Australian case study by Fien and Skoien). Young people around the world showed high concern for labour and animal rights, poverty and the environment. Some major outcomes of the research showed that young people:

- understand the impact of their use and disposal of products on the environment but not of their shopping behaviour;
- prefer individual action to collective action to improve the world; and
- consider as major concerns for the future: environment, human rights and wealth.

The results were largely confirmed by subsequent studies, such as a survey carried out by advertising agency McCann-Erickson in cooperation with UNEP in 2001 (*Youth and Sustainable Consumption: A Worldwide Snapshot*, 2001). McCann-Erickson discovered that sustainable consumption remains a “big ignorance” among youth and that alternatives to irresponsible consumption were not well understood. Price, name of the brand, quality and peer pressure all scored higher than “sustainability” in a ranking of important purchasing conditions. Young people were also generally uneducated about existing avenues for becoming leaders or agents of change in the area of sustainable consumption.

Both surveys highlighted how young people felt responsible for themselves, their friends and their family, but at the same time often felt powerless to act on environmental issues. Many young people considered environmental protection to be “someone else's job”. They believe that it is the responsibility of the media to inform them of environmental issues, but at the same time note that they need further education and empowerment (McCann-Erickson 2001).

### 3.2.3 A sustainable future?

In 2003, there were 3.3 million Australian young people aged between 16 and 28 years. This large potential market means that Australia's retail sector takes a keen interest in the psyche of Generation X and the younger group, Generation Y. A survey conducted by Spin Communications and Sweeney

Research in late 2003 found Australian youth to have an increased dislike of advertising, albeit they are still brand conscious, thought highly of their health and career, while less of marriage and religion. The report showed a greater distrust for not only marketers, but also the pillars of society (Sweeney 2003).

The study identified six young “tribes” – the glitterazzis, burbanites, drifters, life junkies, life mappers and renegades. One of the study’s shortcomings is that it fails to consider other critical youth groups including those that are socially and globally conscious – e.g. “global citizens” group. Although it does help remind us of the highly fragmented nature of young people in Australia and how consumption patterns and lifestyles differ enormously, the survey also reveals some hidden truths. Indeed, an interesting revelation was uncovered during a discussion with one of the project directors, Louise Miller.

While there is a clear pattern of “consumerism” amongst young adults, one finding that was fascinating to us [Sweeney Research] was that 27 per cent of them [youth] had donated their time to a cause in the last month. This figure is supported by ABS data that states the proportion of adults doing voluntary work increased from a quarter in 1995 to almost a third in 2000. They also talk broadly about their concerns for the world; however these concerns relate primarily to their own backyard, i.e. what “might” happen to them or their family. Bali and 9/11 are commonly raised and have stirred a “fear” or anxiety in them that was foreign to say Generation Xers at that stage of their lives.

(Miller 2003)

This desire to seek out “causes” and act in non-materialistic ways highlights the existence of a youth in Australia unhappy with, and unfulfilled by contemporary society (see Eckersley 1999; Tacey 2003). As revealed in Chapter 2, consumers, and particularly young consumers, are seeking out alternative lifestyles to satisfy their needs. Tacey (2003) likens this push into environmental and social causes as a revolution in “ecospirituality” among young Australians. He contests that many young people are finding themselves drawn to ecospirituality or more broadly the “spirituality of nature”.

Young people who become depressed, suicidal or fatigued in response to the hopelessness that confronts the world are living symbolic lives. Their struggles with meaning are not just personal struggles. They are trying to sort out the problems of society, and their sufferings, deaths

and ruptures are not just personal tragedies but contributions to the spiritual dilemmas of the world.

(Tacey 2003)

Tacey (2003) suggests three reasons for an attraction to nature. Firstly, young people are attracted to nature because it represents a response to a perceived absence of meaning in their lives. Young people are spending more and more time staring at TV screens and computer monitors, downloading music and surfing the Web, and less and less time outdoors playing sport and partaking in other activities. Thus, as Tacey notes, “Youth are beginning to champion and idealise nature because they normally see so little of it, appear shut out from it, and feel removed from it. There is an awareness in many young people that this disconnection is abnormal, dangerous and out of balance”. Secondly, an idealistic or “heroic” dimension of youth is brought out in their desire to protect the environment and assist on other social causes. Young people are often free from the shackles of modern society, where their participation in corporate profit-making is yet to take hold. But an important question is whether youth will carry this idealism forward into their adult lives? Some anecdotal evidence suggests that many people that have been exposed to sustainability principles at an early age do indeed practice more sustainable lifestyles in their adulthood, however, clearly further studies need to be commissioned to substantiate this claim. Thirdly, youth get involved in nature and environmental action during a search for moral and spiritual values. “It is this factor that shifts environmental interest beyond the level of heroic or activist concern. The search for ethical values and spiritual affinity with nature transforms environmental concern into ecospirituality.” (Tacey 2003)

This is a cutting-edge interest and there has not been a great deal written about it, which is hardly surprising given the materialistic bias of modern knowledge. But we are witnessing an emergence of ecospiritual concern at the grassroots level, and researchers have not begun to discern what this could mean in terms of a cultural shift away from materialism to a new awareness of living in an enchanted spiritual universe. Nor have we begun to absorb what ecospirituality could mean for changes in youth culture, in identity formation, and in rites of passage into adulthood. It seems that a universe of possibility lies ahead, and I hope some of this possibility is realised in the near future, since youth urgently require a foundation for their experience of the sacred.

Nature is certainly a greater and more rewarding foundation than, for instance experimentation with drugs or mind-altering substances.

(Tacey 2003).

### 3.3 Youth and sustainable consumption survey

This section presents findings from the Youth and Sustainable Consumption Survey prepared for this project. The survey was conducted between November 2003 and April 2004 and sought to identify youth views on:

- the nature and extent of youth consumption;
- some of the drivers of consumption;
- links between consumption, social issues and sustainability;
- youth definitions of sustainable consumption; and
- potential barriers to and enablers of sustainable lifestyles.

#### 3.3.1 Methodology

##### Demographics

Of the 224 young Australians who responded to the survey, 56 per cent were female and 44 per cent were male. The majority of respondents were aged between 15 and 24 (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Age of survey respondents**

AG	No	Per cent
12–14	21	9.4%
15–17	60	26.8%
18–24	117	52.2%
25–28	26	11.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100%</b>

Respondents were spread fairly proportionally between rural, regional and metropolitan Australia (see Figure 2). Surveys were received from all States and Territories and returned via a range of means (post, email and by hand).

**Figure 2: Location of survey respondents**

Location	No. ans.	Per cent
Rural	37	16.5%
Regional	44	19.6%
Metropolitan	143	63.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100%</b>

The survey team worked hard to increase the quantity of responses within the constraints of the project brief and available resources. A reading of the later analysis should be tempered by the relatively small number of survey respondents. However, the results do mirror findings from research undertakings on young people's consumption in other countries (UNESCO 2000) and in Australia (Pocock and Clarke 2004).

The survey was successful in inspiring discussion on sustainable consumption. Many respondents first came to hear of sustainable consumption from this survey. A large number of words of encouragement were also received from young people from all over Australia:

Good work, and great cause. Good luck! (Young person, Tasmania).

I am very keen to be informed as to the findings of this project and how it develops as I think it is a critical issue and an area in which we should focus much of our energy. (Young person, NSW).

Interesting survey! Keep me informed! (Young person, South Australia).

Good on u for doing research on an important topic such as this! Best of luck with the research! (Young person, Qld).

I like your survey, and good luck with your study. (Young person, Northern Territory).

Definitely a subject matter more people need to be aware of. There are many different ways that more people, especially the government can be made aware of how important it is to create a sustainable future and this is definitely one of them. Good luck with everything, I'd like to hear how it eventuates. (Young person, WA).

Great survey! I'd be interested in the results. (Young person, NSW).

#### Design and distribution

In 2000, two small-scale surveys focusing on sustainable consumption and young people were carried out in Australia (UNESCO–UNEP 2000; Bentley 2001). Since then, to the best of the project team's knowledge, no other survey of this type has been conducted. The current survey builds upon the findings of the two previous surveys and aims to determine whether young Australians are conscious of impacts from their consumption behaviour, what influences their consumption choices and what actions they could take to instigate change. One of the goals of the survey is to evaluate the connection young people believe exists between their shopping behaviour and social and environmental impacts.

A draft survey was tested by a small group of young people. A number of sample surveys were forwarded by email to some of the research team's contacts. The returned surveys and comments were analysed by the research team, and the necessary improvements to the survey were made. The age range for the survey (12–28) fits inside the accepted definition of young people by a number of national and international organisations. Because of the large number of surveys reaching young people these days, and the increased demands on youth for their time, the survey was limited to two pages.

A concerted effort was made to maximise the number of survey responses. Having said that, all efforts were made to not restrict the distribution of the survey to those young people whom are already classed as socially aware. Individual young people and youth groups in both metropolitan as well as outback regions volunteered to carry the survey to a wide spectrum of youth in their localities. The views of young people from remote, less socially aware and low socio-economic backgrounds have been included in the study.

The survey was made available in both electronic Word and PDF formats. The survey was also uploaded to the IYPF web site and is downloadable from the following link: <http://www.iypf.org/Downloads/Youth-&-SC-Survey.doc>

Surveys could be completed in less than ten minutes by electronic format and returned via email to [m.bentley@griffith.edu.au](mailto:m.bentley@griffith.edu.au) and in hard copy format and posted to the researchers at Griffith University.

Young people in many organisations across Australia were exposed to the survey. The survey was sent to youth networks such as *YouthGAS*, *Youth.Com*, *YARN*, and the *UNEP Asia Pacific Tunza* environment network. The survey has also been distributed via the joint UNEP–UNESCO global sustainable consumption listserv. Additionally, IYPF distributed surveys to their various national networks of young professionals. In respect of the importance of advertising the sustainable consumption survey to young Australians, the survey was included in various newsletters around the country. These include, *Youth Field Xpress* (November 2003, Youth Studies Australia), <http://www.acys.utas.edu.au/ncys/yfx/2003-11.htm>, *Ignite* (Issue 5, by Youth 2 Youth), and the *Australian National University (ANU) newsletter* of 620 ANU academics, students and external members.

Youth and community organisations, individual young people, State Government departments and academic institutions in every State were contacted about providing assistance to distribute the survey. Some surveys were conducted by phone and many

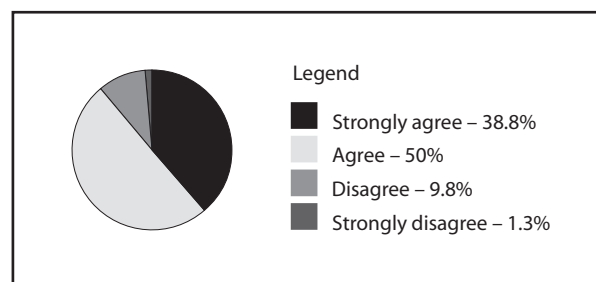
were also distributed by hand and the post to young people, particularly to those in rural areas and to those without Internet access. Surveys completed in hard copy format were posted to Griffith University. Youth groups in Tasmania, Murdoch University in WA, the Queensland Office of Youth Affairs, the Manly Environment Youth Group (NSW), are just a few of the organisations that lent a hand.

### 3.3.2 Findings

#### Young people's consumption

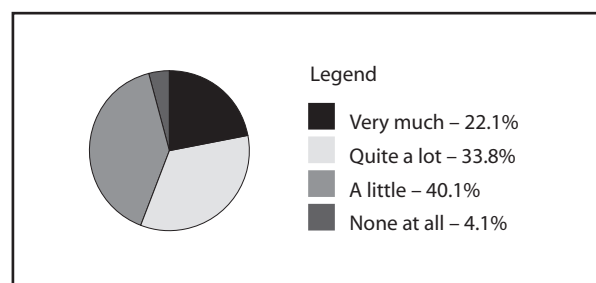
Young Australians overwhelmingly agreed that in general their peers buy too much stuff. In fact, only 10 per cent of young people thought that youth consumption patterns were not a major present-day problem (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Young people buy too much stuff



Having said that, 44 per cent of young people said that they have either only a little or no influence at all over their consumption decisions (see Figure 4). This figure contrasts dramatically with the other 22 per cent of young people who said that they feel like they have very much influence over their buying behaviour. The difference in opinion clearly highlights a void between those who feel powerless to reorient their role in the consumer society and those that believe in their power as consumers to achieve positive change.

Figure 4: How much influence do you have over your consumption behaviour



Young Australians ranked product price, quality and reliability as among the most common factors that influence their shopping decisions (see Figure 5). The family unit is an important driver of youth consumption patterns, particularly for those young people still living at home. Interestingly factors such as the level of their personal finance (9 per cent) and friends/peer pressures (2.2 per cent), “the brand” (2.2 per cent) and the media (1.8 per cent) were rated as relatively minor influences.

Two issues that arise from these responses warrant special comment. First, the influence of “the brand” on youth consumption appears to be very low given the claimed links between product “branding”, youth sense of identity and resultant consumption by authors such as Naomi Klein in *No Logo* and Alicia Quart in *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*. This seeming paradox may be explained by the fact that like adults, young people purchase particular brands because of certain criteria that are inherent with the brand (e.g. Nike shoes may be seen to deliver superior product reliability compared to another brand). Thus, brand-related factors, which include price (26.3 per cent), product quality (21 per cent), reliability (6.3 per cent) and personal image (4.9 per cent), along with the influence of friends (2.2 per cent) and the media (1.8 per cent) do

add up to a significant overall influence on youth consumption habits.

Second, the sustainability of a product (1 per cent) was a very minor consideration. This is matter of concern if it is to be hoped that young people can become leaders of change in Australian society in the area of sustainable consumption although this very low figure is ameliorated to some degree when second and third ranking of influences are considered (young people were asked to rank the 10 factors in order from most to least important).<sup>2</sup>

These results point to the fact that there is potential for young people to become change agents for sustainable consumption in Australia – but only if this potential is developed by consistent and comprehensive programs of education and capacity development that empower young people firstly, to adopt a critical perspective on product branding and the media creation of identity role models through advertising, magazines, television and film and, secondly, understand and commit to consumption patterns based upon a consideration of product life cycle and social justice impacts. Later sections in this report indicate ways in which young people and key representatives of young people believe this may be achieved.

**Figure 5: Influences on consumption**

Influences on consumption <sup>3</sup>	Per cent (rank 1)	Per cent (rank 2)	Per cent (rank 3)	Average (rank 1–3)
Price of product	26.3%	15.6%	9.8%	17.6%
Product quality	21.0%	8.5%	16.1%	15.2%
My family	20.1%	26.8%	16.5%	21.1%
My finances (money)	8.9%	22.2%	25.4%	18.8%
Product reliability	6.3%	12.1%	8.0%	8.8%
Myself	4.9%	2.2%	8.0%	5.0%
My friends	2.2%	2.2%	1.3%	1.9%
The brand	2.2%	1.3%	0.4%	1.3%
The media	1.8%	1.8%	2.7%	2.1%
Sustainability of product	0.9%	1.8%	6.3%	3.0%

### How age, gender and location affect the results

Although this study is limited in its ability to explore different attitudes, triggers and issues between different groups of youth, some general trends that were uncovered include:

- As age increases so does social and environmental awareness/concern; as does acceptance of responsibility for SC (influences of downshifting?).

- Younger age groups are less inclined to believe they consume too much, less conscious of impacts and more likely to never consider effects of individual products.
- Younger participants are more likely to note they have not thought about SC before and that sustainable products are not chosen because they are not convenient to their needs.
- More alternative definitions of SC are provided by

<sup>2</sup> Money/price was another influencing factor that received considerably higher selection rates for the second and third ranked option (see Figure 5).

<sup>3</sup> There was a 5.4 per cent non-response rate on the first ranked selection. Hence, percentages do not total 100.

the older age demographic; younger age groups are more likely to not understand meaning of SC.

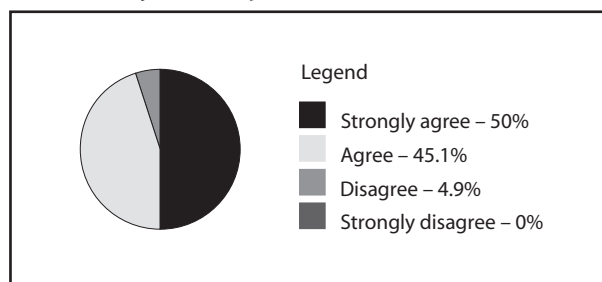
- Females are slightly more concerned/socially active than males.
- City youth are more conscious of over-consumption than rural and regional youth.
- Young people in rural/regional Australia show more concern for people in need (poverty) .

### Ambivalence: The disconnect between social concern and personal action

As noted above, almost 90 per cent of those surveyed said that they think young people buy too many products (Figure 3). Nevertheless, it is hard to judge the balance of commitment and ambivalence regarding consumption from this data alone. Many young people share a critique of consumerism (Pocock and Clarke 2004) and are not convinced by government and business leaders about the need for ongoing (and unsustainable) material accumulation. Grounds for moving to a post-materialist, or as Hamilton (2003) has called it a *post-growth society*, clearly rest upon factors concerning individual responsibility and consumer power.

Encouragingly, and in step with findings from a UNESCO study (2000), young Australians agreed (50 per cent strongly agree and 45 per cent agree) that they are personally responsible for making more sustainable consumption choices (see Figure 6). Conversely, and as demonstrated in the sections below, consuming less and/or more efficiently was often understood as a societal goal rather than an individual responsibility.

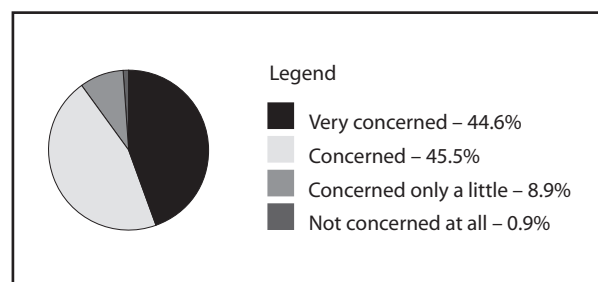
**Figure 6: I am responsible for making my consumption more sustainable**



As other consultations in Australia and overseas have shown (WWF 2000, UNESCO 2000, Loughland et al. 2002), young people give the impression of being highly concerned about the environment and the wellbeing of others. For example, when asked to rate their concern for the environment and the plight

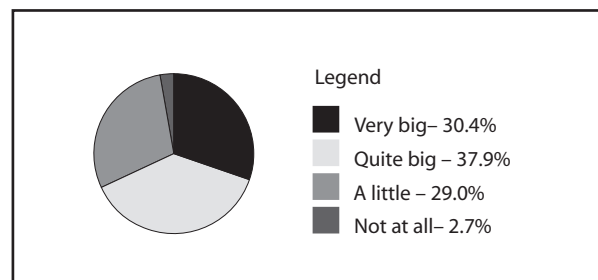
of the needy, nine in ten young people said that they were either concerned or very concerned (see for example Figure 7).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 7: Level of concern for the environment**



Consumption is also considered to be a major cause of many societal problems. An overwhelming number of those surveyed agree (44 per cent) and strongly agree (48 per cent) that shopping behaviour negatively impacts social and environmental systems. Young Australians admit that their consumption choices have a very big (30 per cent) or quite big (38 per cent) impact on the environment and wellbeing of others (see Figure 8). Encouraging as this may sound; more than three in ten young people still believe that their consumption choices have merely little or no impact at all on the environment and wellbeing of others. Certainly, many of these young people have yet to be exposed to educational tools that highlight the effects of unsustainable consumption.

**Figure 8: The size of my shopping impact**

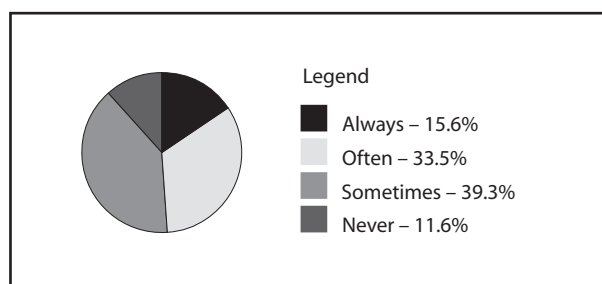


Approximately half of the young people surveyed said that they always or often consider a product's impact before buying it (see Figure 9). However, close to 40 per cent only sometimes consider the impacts of their shopping behaviour, with 12 per cent admitting to never parading such thoughts. Indeed, the degree of "consideration" might be assumed to be relatively minor when the low ranking (10th in a list of 10) of such consideration reported in Figure 5 is noted.

Note: Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 7 do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>4</sup> Young people were asked to state their level of concern for the environment and their level of concern for the wellbeing of other people in two separate questions. The results were almost identical. Hence, only the graph for the level of concern for the environment has been displayed in this section.

**Figure 9: I consider a product's impact before buying it**

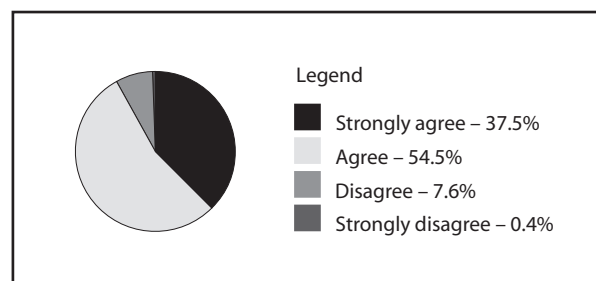


This apparent disconnection between a high acknowledgment of consumption's impacts and a lower capacity to accept personal responsibility at the point of sale/purchase has been well documented by several Australian and international studies (see Bussey 2003). The UNEP–UNESCO's global sustainable consumption survey (2000) found that young people were largely unaware of the link between their individual shopping behaviour and the problems that they routinely accept as resulting from overconsumption. Of course, this is not to suggest that some young people are not already taking action to foster sustainable consumption in their communities (see for example Section 3.4) but they would appear to be in a small minority. Exploring further the factors that trigger this disconnection and the measures that can be used to address it are necessary.

This disconnection has been described by Connell et al. (1998) in terms of the sociological concept of “ambivalence”. Ambivalence is a condition in which people feel mixed emotions or sense mixed evaluations; they have “experiences of mixed feelings, a vague and diffuse sense of being pulled in two directions ... of feeling pushed or pulled, even though we have a defined and normal emotion pulling in a different direction” (Weigert 1991). Ambivalence, however, is not just a matter of personal or individual responses to choices. That is, young people do not necessarily develop feelings of ambivalence because of some entirely personal dynamic. Rather, ambivalence often reflects the structure of the society we live in. One part of the social reality pulls one way (towards sustainability) while another part pulls the opposite way (towards consumption). Thus, this study found, along with Connell et al. (1998) that young people are highly concerned about environmental and social issues but also share the desires promoted by popular culture and, indeed, may find their sense of agency for sustainable consumption and other acts of social and environmental commitment undermined by feelings of frustration and sometimes even anger as a result of their observations of limited proactive change in society (Connell et al. 1998).

Despite such experiences of ambivalence, most young Australians certainly do appreciate that there would be a positive effect on the environment and the wellbeing of others if they changed the amount of and/or things they bought (see Figure 10). In fact, a mere 7.6 per cent of those surveyed disagreed with this view. However, there are important underlying factors that restrict young people from consuming more sustainably. Some of these restrictions, as well as examples of actions that might encourage further sustainable consumption by young people, will be discussed in later sections.

**Figure 10: By changing my behaviour I could bring about positive change**



### What is sustainable consumption?

There seems to be evidence that many young Australians are keen to confront issues such as overconsumption and materialism. But what do they actually understand about the various alternative lifestyles available? More precisely, what does sustainable consumption really mean to young people?

Indeed, pinpointing a definition on sustainable consumption has challenged academics and international policy experts for a number of years. Therefore, we asked young people to make a maximum of three choices of factors that could be attributed to sustainable consumption from a list of ten possibilities. Nearly 20 per cent of young people selected the “all of the above” response as one of these three, thereby indicating a comprehensive appreciation of the broad meaning of sustainable consumption. Apart from this response, by far the most common one was “society needs to find more efficient ways to consume”. The next two most commonly chosen answers were “looking after the environment” and “thinking about future generations”. Embedded within the first response (“society needs to find more efficient ways to consume”) are the many elements included in many major definitions of sustainable consumption. This breadth of understanding was revealed in many of the volunteered additional statements on this question, including:

I think that it means we need to consume in a way which has the least impact on the earth and other creatures. Some of the above (like consuming less) might be ways in which that can be achieved. (Male, Queensland).

I think it means that we consume in a way that causes no damage whatsoever. We just put back what we take out, etc. (Male, Western Australia).

I feel that the most important factor influencing my choices is whether or not the products are cruelty free, yet this was not an option in the survey. Your survey is about sustainable consumption, yet you only mention things like hurting the environment or hurting people – what about hurting animals? This is a massive issue as far as sustainability goes and is closely tied to both the issues of environment and human rights. I think you would get some very interesting results if you addressed the issue of vegetarianism as it is very closely tied to sustainability. (Female, Victoria).

Using resources at a rate lower than that at which they are produced (i.e. oil takes millions of years to form, so we should be using it at the rate of formation). (Male, ACT).

Consumption must be done in a way that is socially and environmentally equitable, both to present and future generations of life. (Female, South Australia).

My consumption should have a positive impact elsewhere in the world. (Female, NSW).

Sustainable consumption relates to the ability of our consumption habits to continue indefinitely, without affecting the prospects of future generations. In practice this means that I, and humans generally, need to consume less than our current levels. (Male, Western Australia).

Many young people suggested that society needs to consume less as well as find alternative modes of consumption. However, a lot young people quite rightly pointed out the importance of such issues as more intangible resource use like household and transport energy, and other non-purchasing sustainability actions such as recycling. Indeed, many young people gave examples of how they are already consuming more sustainably by reusing and recycling products and saving resources at home, at school and in the workplace.

The distinction between group action and individual action was again obvious with fewer young people choosing answers that reflect personal responsibility (e.g. “I need to consume less”) than those young people lamenting group action (“society needs to consume less”).

### Barriers to and enablers of change

When young people were asked to cite the number one reason why they do not always choose sustainable products or services, a clear majority said that these products were not convenient to their needs (see Figure 11). Taking this data on face value, it would seem that many young people are echoing common complaints about the lack of sustainable (green) products on the market. Almost 20 per cent of the young people surveyed said that they believed sustainable alternatives were too expensive. Seventeen per cent said that they were not easily available and 6 per cent suggested that there were no green products that could act as substitutes to everyday products.

**Figure 11: Barriers to change**

Barriers	No. ans.	Per cent
Not convenient to my needs	66	29.5%
Too expensive	44	19.6%
Not easily available	39	17.4%
Not enough information	25	11.2%
No substitutes to everyday products	14	6.3%
I have never thought about this before	12	5.4%
Too boring	8	3.6%
I choose sustainable things all the time	7	3.1%
I don't know any sustainable products or services	7	3.1%
I do not think it is necessary	2	0.9%
<b>TOTAL OBS.</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100%</b>

A lack of information was a key barrier also, with 11 per cent saying that they needed more information about alternative products and services and an additional 3 per cent stating that they do not even know of any sustainable products or services.

Certainly, marketers and product manufactures should be encouraged to tap into young people's consumer and branding identity to create and market sustainable products that meet young people's needs and fulfil role model ideals that drive their consumption. Given

that the survey results show that a large proportion of youth are concerned about the environment and feel a sense of responsibility for sustainable actions, it is likely that youth would respond favourably to sustainable products which were marketed in such a way as to simultaneously meet identity needs associated with product purchase and fulfil their sense of responsibility for environmental action.

Young people's most popular first-ranked responses (see Figure 12) for encouraging others to make more sustainable consumption choices were, providing education on sustainable consumption (31 per cent), involving the media (33 per cent) and getting access to government (participation – 17 per cent). One in 10 young people believed taking action as part of a youth group was the key enabler of change. The

**Figure 12: Enablers of change**

Enablers <sup>5</sup>	No. ans. (rank 1)	Per cent
Involving the media	74	33.0%
Educating in schools, universities	70	31.3%
Getting access to the government	39	17.4%
Taking action as part of a youth group	22	9.8%
Telling companies what you want	14	6.3%
<b>TOTAL OBS.</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>97.8%</b>

There was a more equal spread of the results when taking into consideration a greater number of young people's choices for encouraging others to act (they were asked to rank from a list of five the best ways to inspire change). Although the order of importance of each of the five alternatives remained the same when combining the first three ranked options, the more even spread that is evident highlights the fact that there is a diversity of views on the best ways to encourage young people to choose sustainable lifestyles. There is no one magic solution for achieving sustainable consumption, something clearly reflected in the following statement by one of the survey participants:

We need all these actions in a multi-faceted approach. (Young person, 24)

However, young people acting alone to bring about sustainable consumption will find the going difficult without effective changes to underlying infrastructure (transport, education, etc.) and organisational behaviour, and without proactive government support (see Section 3.4 and 3.5).

In conclusion to this section, it is important to note that the survey component of this consultation would be best considered a pilot study. Indeed, this was its intent as it was an additional service provided by the research team, beyond the NYARS project brief. Nevertheless, a diverse cross-section

least likely form of action to generate change was considered to be telling companies what you want (6 per cent). Of course, this could reflect the fact young people need the training and education to be able to approach companies. Alternatively, this may be a sign of young people's inherent distrust of companies to offer products and services that genuinely reflect the needs (as well as the concerns) of many young Australians. For instance, one survey participant commented that an important response would be to:

... just tell people the truth. Not all people know about Nestlé's massacres, why the heck not? People are fed so much jargon so they respect those who are honest. (Young person, 18).

of young Australians has been consulted and many of the findings reiterate results of other studies. It is highly likely that there are great divergences in the level of concern and motivational triggers about sustainability among youth as a broad group. These divergences need to be explored, to ensure that each section of the group is targeted meaningfully for any resulting actions. Further research on youth and sustainable consumption in Australia might benefit from larger and more in-depth national quantitative and qualitative studies than were possible for this present initiative.

## 3.4 Sustainable consumption workshops

### 3.4.1 Introduction

The patterns revealed in the survey were explored further in a series of consultations with young people in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. In order to structure the process of consultation and to address the lack of a comprehensive, integrated education program (see Section 4.3.6), the project team conducted a "capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents" program which it developed as part of the NYARS funded research. The program was designed to achieve four objectives:

<sup>5</sup> There was a non-response rate of 2.2 per cent for this survey question.

1. to elicit the views of young people on sustainable consumption and what it would take to support them to be agents of change in their community for more sustainable consumption;
2. to provide information on sustainable consumption possibilities, tools for analysing consumption impacts and critical thinking skills for exploring and evaluating alternative consumption choices;
3. to enhance skills in personal decision-making and youth leadership; and
4. to utilise the results of the literature review (Chapter 2), the results of the survey (Section 3.2) and case studies of tools and programs that were researched (Chapter 4) to develop and test an "ideal" or "model" program for achieving the underlying goal of the research project – young people being equipped as agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities.

Youth feedback based on actual experiences with the sustainable consumption education examples and tools in the workshops and their attempts at implementing personal and community change has provided extremely valuable research data that complements the youth survey and literature review.

A pilot for the program was conducted as part of Eco-Innovate 03 in Sydney in July 2003. Based on the evaluation of this pilot, observations of Eco-Innovate 03, analysis of the literature, and the experience of the project team, a program featuring train-the-trainer and youth workshops was implemented in Bendigo, the Mornington Peninsula, Brisbane and Adelaide throughout March and April 2004 (see Figure 13). A sixth/additional workshop planned for Canberra was cancelled due to the time and resource constraints of the project. Similarly, the project team were unable to respond to requests to convene workshops in the Northern Territory and in Logan (south of Brisbane).

**Figure 13: Details on youth workshop participants**

Location	Age and gender	Living arrangements	Current activity	Interest in issues	Prior community activity
<b>Adelaide</b> 6 people	Range is 15–26 yrs Average is 20 yrs Males – 3 Females – 3	In family home – 4 Left family – 2	School students – 2 Working – 2 Tertiary students – 1 Unemployed – 1	Low to moderate interest in politics, high to very high interest in most other issues; lower interest on most issues for the school students vs. the others	Active group who has participated in things like 40 hour famine, Young Achievement Australia, and local environmental initiatives
<b>Bendigo</b> 18 people	Range is 14–27 yrs Average is 19.5 yrs Males – 4 Females – 14	In family home – 10 Left family – 8	School students – 6 Tertiary students – 4 Working – 8	A diverse group, moderate on many issues, youth employment of high interest to a few, the environment more of high interest than not, materialism typically moderate to low interest	Events like Walk Against Want, Clean Up Australia Day, tree planting and Shave 4 a Cure were common; youth and school councils also common
<b>Brisbane</b> 11 people	Range is 16–21 yrs Average is 19 yrs Males – 6 Females – 5	In family home – 8 Left family – 3	School students – 1 Tertiary students – 9 Working – 1	Generally high interest in most issues presented, particularly the environment and Third World poverty	Quite an active group, lots of association with green groups, tree planting, school outreach, and events like Walk Against Want
<b>Mornington</b> 8 people	Range is 15–20 yrs Average is 16.5 yrs Males – 4 Females – 4	In family home – 8	School students – 7 Working – 1	Moderate interest on most issues presented, high interest in youth employment	Little to no prior activity, except for one-off events like Clean Up Australia Day; some tree planting
<b>Sydney</b> 100 people	Pilot workshop at Eco-Innovate 03 conference		Mostly high-school students	A range of different interests, many interested in sustainability and eco-innovation	

A complete account of the development and implementation of the program, including all evaluation data, is included in Appendix 2 and a brief case study of the program is presented in Section

5.2.1. The evaluations inform the Recommendations made in Section 7, in particular Section 7.2 that outlines elements of an effective national program to build the capacity of young Australians to be agents

of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities.

### 3.4.2 Findings

Evaluations completed during youth workshops, and between four and six weeks post the youth workshops, communicate youth views on enablers and barriers to youth action for sustainable consumption, the role of media in sustainable consumption, and actions to achieve more sustainable consumption in their own lives and in the community.

#### Enablers of and barriers to youth action on sustainable consumption

##### Enablers

As part of the workshop in each centre, participants were asked **what they thought government and community needs to do to support young Australians like them to work towards more sustainable consumption**. The Eco-Innovate participants also brainstormed “enablers for sustainability” in their workshop. Young people’s responses reflect a number of themes, such as:

##### *Being heard*

- Opportunities for young people to speak out and be listened to, such as talking to young people about “what we need more of or less of”, having special sections in local councils that focuses on listening to young people and supporting them to take action on things important to them.

##### *Investing in ideas and action*

- Supporting young people with ideas that benefit the community, such as promoting more sustainable living, to implement their ideas; this could involve incentives, financial investment and people to help oversee projects and provide encouragement.
- Funding youth research that leads to youth-based action, where the actors/workers are involved in the whole process.

Support young Aussies to implement change, e.g. applying for a grant is difficult, we need assistance; showing faith in ordinary young people rather than just the high achievers. (Female, 23, Bendigo).

The government needs to provide more opportunities for funding to develop projects that will help. It needs to make information for funding applications more accessible especially in rural and regional areas. Community needs to spread the word when projects occur and educate one another. (Female, 22, Adelaide).

##### *Political support for more sustainable living*

- Use regulatory mechanisms to encourage

sustainable living, for example, offering incentives and rebates for consuming more sustainably, providing cheaper sustainable products, making laws on packaging.

- Make sustainable consumption a priority, and show that it is a priority.
- Create more sustainable policy.

##### *Education and awareness raising*

- Utilise the media to raise awareness about the need for more sustainable consumption in the community.
- Education in schools and the community on consuming more sustainably.
- Funding more workshops such as those delivered within the NYARS capacity building program so there is greater awareness.
- Education that comes with accessible resources so young people can use them effectively.

##### *Local opportunities*

- Having local organisations and networks to be a part of.
- Taking local action.
- Support from local peers.

A small number of participants also mentioned some form of recognition for work done, i.e. accreditation.

Post-youth workshop evaluations also asked what do you think helps people to make change happen towards more sustainable consumption with reference to their own attempted action since the workshop. Many of the same themes identified in the workshop evaluations were repeated. “Support from local peers” was highlighted with a number of people identifying having friends and colleagues to provide encouragement, to work with, and who had similar outlooks and understandings of sustainable consumption as an enabler for sustainable consumption action. This point was reinforced from other comments in the post-workshop evaluations, with young people valuing opportunities to share their workshop learning with friends and colleagues, the importance of being in touch further with other workshop participants, and suggestions for follow-up workshops and meetings. Online interactions were valuable but no substitute for personal interaction. The following comment illustrates some of the responses:

It would have been more beneficial and I would have been more motivated had we organised another time to meet up with the group again. (Female, Brisbane).

“Education and awareness raising activities” was also reiterated. Young people identified that

a greater general understanding in the community of sustainable consumption would make it easier to be motivated, because “people would listen to you” (which overlaps with the workshop evaluation suggestion of “being heard”) and be more supportive. The need for bigger picture policy and fiscal incentives were also restated, with one young person saying:

People's values are hard to change, and in my experience the best motivation for sustainable consumption is money. An example would be tax rebates for rainwater tanks or solar panels. (Male, Brisbane).

### Barriers

Participants in the youth workshops **also identified barriers to them taking action towards more sustainable consumption, and proposed some ways to overcome them.**

The following table summarises the types of barriers and solutions identified in young people's responses.

**Figure 14: Barriers to action and possible solutions to overcome**

Barriers	Solutions
Packaging is everywhere	Buy fresh produce, re-use not just recycle, bring your own containers
People are constantly told to consume more	Advertise less consumption and educate
Funding and support	Ask groups and government
Selfishness	Take a global perspective
Lack of time and money	Plan and manage better; make regular habits; financial incentives
Ambivalence	Action competence/empowerment
Not always recycle bins around	Hold on to rubbish until find recycling bin
Have to use car for work	Get up early and catch public transport
Language and beliefs (e.g. live with international students)	Use very basic English; start with small projects
Comfort zone	Get a few friends involved and enjoy it
Lack of interest	Get others involved and do fun projects
Motivation	Encouragement, education, patience, patience, patience
Habit and too much to do	Wash hair one day and shave legs the next instead of all at once
Car usage and reliance	Car pooling, public transport, ride bike
Excessive water usage	Less shower time
Excess paper, including paper to recycle	Re-use for phonebooks, paper, etc.
Lack of public transport	Use bike more, time management
Turning knowledge in to action	Making “personal” practise an example
Embarrassment and shyness	Get friends involved and work in a group
Not knowing what brands are “green”	Research internet/green food/product guides

The post-youth workshop evaluations asked **what do you think makes it hard for people to make change happen towards more sustainable consumption** in reflecting on their own efforts to take action since the workshop. Many of those issues identified in the workshop activities were raised, including lack of time, lack of money, and other commitments such as university and work. Some young people felt “trapped in current lifestyles”. Others found the experience of not being the decision-maker in the family home a barrier, with their parents often over-ruling their “green” product preferences. On the financial front, some people stated that the sustainable alternatives are too expensive, and that:

Lack of money can affect whether you are able to make big changes to the infrastructure of homes and workplaces (e.g. installation of solar hot water systems). (Female, Adelaide).

Two other direct statements illustrate the complex nature of the barriers, and their interrelationships:

I think it is simply easier to be unsustainable – how we have been taught, how our communities are organised – it's easier to throw all rubbish in one bin, cheaper to buy non-organic produce, fast food is simple and cheap, easier to drive the car than wait for a bus, and until it becomes any different I think that people will continue in this way until they have to do something. (Female, Adelaide).

Money is an issue, and probably time. Let's face it, these days everyone is so caught up in their own world with work, uni, family and socialising. And when all of that finishes at the end of the day, people just want to carry on the way they have been since they were born, and relax on the couch in front of the TV before going to bed and starting the process all over again. (Female, Bendigo).

### Media and sustainable consumption

The literature review explained the strong influence of the media on the development of conceptions of desirable lifestyles and personal identities, especially product advertising and branding. Individual advertisements for individual products are not considered the major issue, but rather the accumulated messages of all advertisements and media (e.g. film and television) that together provide a strong message about what sort of "look" and behaviours constitute a desirable lifestyle and influence a person's sense of personal identity and worth. Young people seemed very conscious of the influence of the media in these matters. For example, themes that emerged from the discussions during the workshops, include:

#### *Cool = consuming*

- Media messages tell us that we consume our way to being cool, by wearing particular brands, using certain products, owning "cool" things, etc.
- Young people felt that current consumption messages dominated their abilities to think "otherwise" and needed to be countered by major government campaigns – not to consume less but to consume differently, with an awareness of the impacts in mind.

#### *Costs and Benefits*

- Consuming more sustainably can save you money NOW.

- Not consuming more sustainably now will cost us more – as a generation and maybe even as individuals – in the future.
- The real costs of products are not understood, known or accounted for – in terms of social or environmental impact.
- Enhanced health through eating better, choosing organic, getting outside, and working in the community with other people.

#### *Relativity and Equity*

- In Australia, it's important to view our consumption in relation to developing countries, and to take into account those with nothing or very little, to get some perspective on our needs versus our wants.

Young people in the youth workshop evaluations were asked two questions about effective media for sustainable consumption. One question asked participants to reflect on the media activities and suggest key messages that are necessary about sustainable consumption for young Australians. A second question asked what messages would be most successful in promoting sustainable consumption to young people. There was considerable overlap in people's responses to these questions, often referring to their answer to the other question as the answer for one of these two items. The answers are therefore treated together below in Figure 15.

The importance of media messages in promoting unsustainable or sustainable consumption was further highlighted in post-youth workshop evaluations. The poster creation and "Adbusters" activities – while getting mixed responses on workshop evaluations as to its utility (see Appendix 2) – were mentioned as very useful on reflection, helping young people to analyse and challenge "propaganda" and realise how employing similar methods to sell positive messages could be very effective.

**Figure 15: Key and successful messages to promote sustainable consumption to young Australians**

Slogans	Messages	Principles / ideas
Use enough efficiently	Consume only <u>what you need</u> – others have nothing	The "real" costs of goods (e.g. cost on environment, sweatshop workers)
Desire and need are not the same thing	Sustainable consumption is not a negative thing! It benefits you and everyone else	Ourselves compared to others with less. Maybe scare people with future comparisons if things don't change
Think before you purchase	Think of what the future will be like if changes aren't made now. Do you want that on your conscience?	Young Australians should be shown that not everyone has access to the same resources as us and an equilibrium must be reached for a sustainable future
The Five "R"s: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rethink!	There are other ways to consume, other lifestyles that bring <u>happiness</u>	Stop promoting slim people, junk food, etc. and start promoting sustainable living
It's not far, you don't need a car	Think about ways you can make changes that help the environment and other people	Car issues – carpooling, ways to save money

It's not hard/It has real consequences for the future	Some people overconsume while others can't even consume the necessities	Letting people know they weren't born to consume
That we can make a change	The lifestyles we take for granted are eating the future. Sustainable living will <u>improve</u> life for everyone	Make up your own mind don't just go with what's cool
More need, less want	Don't believe everything you see and hear. Have your own opinion. Don't be influenced by trashy magazines	Tell them why it is important for our society, human race and personally
Sustainability is "cool"	We don't need everything to be cool and perfect and popular, besides sustainability can be cool	Info about production of products
Start small, achieve small goals to bring about the bigger picture	Living sustainably will not remove the fun from a youthful lifestyle, but not living sustainably will soon remove the fun from all lifestyles	Using media and role models, e.g. footballers etc. so that it becomes "cool"
Cars and makeup aren't your identity	It is an empowering act that enables them to help have a greater say about their future	How to make a difference, e.g. turn off light when not in room
It is achievable	One person can make a huge difference	Moderation
You and your community can be healthier	Get outside and get involved	Education through daily life, e.g. label packaging, media, schools
	Be happy with yourself; you don't need to be more than that	

### Actions for more sustainable consumption

A final set of questions in the workshop evaluations are those that asked young people about **what they thought was the most important activity to achieve sustainable consumption and what they themselves were going to do after the workshop to work towards more sustainable consumption** in their own lives and in their communities.

### **What is the most important activity to achieve more sustainable consumption?**

#### *Education*

Many participants in the youth workshops believed education to be the most important activity, particularly education in schools. Universities were also seen as vital locations for education for sustainable consumption and more sustainable lifestyles to take place. This education would need to teach people about why sustainable consumption is important, and how to integrate ideas in to their lifestyles. More general community education was also recognised as important, mostly through the media, and it should include information on more sustainable, alternative products to those currently being used. One person suggested that education should also target those in vocations through offering seminars on the job relating to the eco-implications of that particular industry.

#### *Training*

Training was mentioned frequently in conjunction with education. However, it was also differentiated in terms of training people to run projects successfully and providing implementation support programs.

#### *Media*

Media was mentioned in conjunction with education in terms of community education and awareness raising. It was also an activity of its own. Countering consumerist messages was seen as important, which included gaining greater control of the media to spread more positive messages and to educate the general public. Media was seen as the most effective way to reach people and raise their awareness about sustainable consumption issues.

### **How will you take action when you return home?**

Young people were encouraged by the workshops to propose ways in which they would take direct action upon returning home. Here are a few examples of the things participants said they would do from today to help achieve more sustainable consumption:

Thinking before choosing products/goods and share opinions and views on SC with my mates. (Female, 21, Brisbane).

Volunteer for Parks Victoria; member of Clean Ocean Foundation; recycle more. (Female, 16, Mornington).

Encourage recycling of bottles and cans at my university. (Female, 20, Adelaide).

Try to pass on the tips and info I got today; think before I use and buy things; do more projects around the home that have an impact on the environment. (Male, 15, Bendigo).

Assist to get a carpooling program running; paper recycling – green pads; not take water/electricity for granted. (Female, 19, Brisbane).

Use less electricity; more water efficient; encourage my parents to be more efficient in every day things. (Male, 16, Mornington).

Spreading amongst community; making web sites about SC; spreading amongst schools. (Male, 18, Bendigo).

Try and integrate our ideas in to school and uni; green books on campus with recycled paper. (Female, 19, Brisbane).

Make a youth version of the green guide; try to stop driving for fun; buy local products. (Male, 21, Bendigo).

Start recycling more often by starting a compost heap. (Male, 15, Adelaide).

Buy less; travel by bus more, travel less in general; educate others more. (Female, 18, Brisbane).

Promote workshops through YSA; regular articles in YSA newsletter; be more aware myself and make better choices. (Female, 21, Brisbane).

Be more water-wise; buy local produce; ride bike to school. (Male, 16, Mornington).

Promote guidelines for sustainable consumption; follow these guidelines; get other people to promote these guidelines. (Male, 16, Brisbane).

Buy more green products and research into what are/aren't green companies/corporations. (Female, 22, Adelaide).

Ride to school instead; don't use as much water. (Male, 15, Mornington).

Be more conscious in my everyday life; suggest resource/environment conservation options at work; read the material given. (Female, 23, Bendigo).

The post-youth workshop evaluations had young people report on what actions they had undertaken since the workshop towards more sustainable consumption in their own lives and in the community more generally. While it can be expected that those who returned the post-workshop evaluations are not “typical” of all workshop participants, their responses are informative. Many reported successful personal lifestyle changes, reducing their own ecological footprint and consuming more sustainably, yet found influencing others and undertaking community projects more challenging as a result of many of the barriers discussed above.

Successful personal lifestyle actions included:

- reducing energy consumption by changing and upgrading computer systems to smaller, more energy efficient machines;

- recycling more plastics and cardboards and starting a compost heap;
- carpooling;
- installing a water saving shower head; and
- reduction in meat consumption.

Externally focused actions included:

- introducing schools to the Sustainable Living Competition and getting them involved;
- helping organise a local organic farmers market;
- assisting local young people to present at an environmental education conference on sustainable consumption;
- writing an article on sustainability for my organisation's periodical;
- passing information on to other Green Corps team leaders, and introducing the topic to them, reaching about 150 people; and
- developing a pamphlet on sustainable energy to distribute locally.

### 3.5 Discussions with key youth representatives

A train-the-trainer workshop was conducted in the day preceding each of the youth workshops in order to involve local youth leaders in the workshops and to equip them to conduct further workshops on their own. While not “youth views” per se, discussions and conversations during the train-the-trainer workshops provide an additional dimension to discussions about young people as agents of change for sustainable consumption.

Two major themes emerged from discussions with youth representatives at the train-the-trainer sessions:

1. Sustainable consumption is an ideal “entry point” to a range of youth development issues and activities.
2. Sustainable consumption activities can address issues associated with a “lack of purpose in life”.

Youth representatives stressed that “sustainable consumption” has great potential as an ideal entry point for young people into a range of youth development activities. It was recognised that “sustainable consumption” spans a range of social, environmental and economic fields and issues, and, as such, most young people would find something of interest and relevance to them and their own lives, e.g. water use, tree planting, politics, designing new technologies, growing vegetables, advertising and

marketing. It may be that young people already possess interests of relevance without understanding the potentially positive impact they could have on their communities.

Thus, these youth representatives saw many possibilities for using sustainable consumption as a “lens” or “organiser” of various youth engagement, outreach and development activities and programs. Not only did it provide a great deal of scope for young people, it also was something that could align with existing missions and activities of organisations serving young people (i.e. those represented at the train-the-trainer workshops). Participants saw sustainable consumption as having considerable applicability for use with those young people defined variously as “disadvantaged”, “marginalised” and “at-risk”, because of the strong stream of “doing” activities as opposed to those more abstract or academic. Combining “doing” things with making a difference to the community was seen as very beneficial.

This last point leads on to the other major theme to emerge from discussions. From the train-the-trainer discussions, there appeared to be a growing feeling that an underlying “problem” associated with Australian young people – and issues like suicide, crime, and mental illness – is a lack of purpose. That is, that young people don't have a strong sense of purpose for their lives, which also overlaps with a diminished sense of belonging.

A sustainable consumption framework may assist young people to develop a sense of purpose larger than themselves (and perhaps their prescribed role as consumers?). Train-the-trainer participants were excited by the idea that young people could be empowered to “make a positive difference” in their communities, taking meaningful civic action and thereby gaining a sense of meaning for their lives and the ability to influence and play an active role in the creation of the future of their world.

### 3.6 Concluding remarks: Towards action competence

Many young people define themselves through what they buy. Social inclusion is sometimes sought via a competitive race “for coolness through stuff”. Pocock and Clarke (2004) describe how many young Australians exist on a “treadmill of endless desire” that rarely reaches a pinnacle of happiness.

This sometimes sounds like a cruel and wasteful race. It is one that many young people understand, resist, critique and mock – but participate in nevertheless.

(Pocock and Clarke 2004)

Similarly, Kenway and Bullen (2001) suggest that young people are critical of aspects of consumer culture, but they are not critical of consumption as a way of life. Even so, some “tribes” of young people exhibit clear anti-consumerist behaviour and many others – known as “global citizens” or what Kenway and Bullen (2001) call “cyberflâneurs” – practice good global citizenship and support social causes through technologies such as the Internet.

The youth consultations segment of this study has revealed that young people believe that their peers buy too much stuff. Some young people practice consumption-minimising lifestyles and many others support ideals inherent in definitions of sustainable consumption. They are also highly concerned about the environment and wellbeing of others, and many mark themselves as responsible for affecting changes in consumption patterns. Some young Australians are taking action into their own hands and implementing an array of projects that foster sustainable consumption in their communities. These include actions at the individual level (choosing sustainable products and saving resources at home) and at the group and community level (local sustainability guides and product labelling).

However, a high level of social concern has been shown to not necessarily translate into a high level of personal action. This disconnection has been explained through an ambivalence young people feel about social problems and solutions. By witnessing a limited form of proactive social change in society, many young people become disenchanted, pessimistic and often even angry (Connell et al. 1998). Ambivalence as well as a “lack of life purpose” can certainly restrict any desire young people might have to take action.

Although many young people do actively support sustainable consumption by recycling and reusing, choosing products better for the environment and conserving water at home, ambivalence, weak sense of purpose/belonging and other barriers often limit further active environmental and social citizenship (see also Manning and Ryan 2004). These other barriers to action on sustainable consumption include the daily mountain of messages to consume, lack of time and money, infrastructure restraints (e.g. poor public transport) and limited training and capacity building opportunities. It is this final point – concerning training and empowering young people – that is one of the most crucial.

There are ways of overcoming young people's feelings of frustration and action paralysis. Indeed, a comprehensive review of research on the psychological aspects of changing consumption

behaviour has revealed that the most significant of all factors are: (i) intrinsic motivation; (ii) awareness of appropriate consumption actions; and (iii) skill in practising such actions (De Young 1996). Reorienting attitudes toward active citizenship at an early life stage is important as barriers such as ambivalence may well be carried into adulthood. As Connell et al. (1998) note:

Urgent attention is required at schools, in the media and in the home to illustrate that optimism is possible because many people are already working to solve environmental problems and that they, as young people and later as adults, can join them in this. A necessary first step is for young Australians to develop the capacity to envision alternative futures, to think critically about them, to plan and evaluate alternative courses of actions, and to translate their attitudes of concern into motivation, willingness and an ability to act for the environment.

These are the attributes that encompass what Jensen and Schnack (1997) call “action competence” (see also Smith 2003). The action competence approach for sustainable consumption emphasises the need for learning and skill development rather than a platform that focuses solely on consumerism’s impact and sustainable consumption solutions. A number of benefits that can result from an action-orientated approach to education and community learning include:

- not relying on experts (environmentalists, planners or teachers) telling people/students

what they should believe or how they should behave;

- promoting community understanding of issues and active engagement in, and support for, appropriate public policy;
- promoting a personal consideration of ethical issues and local decision making;
- helping people to feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the actions they choose;
- encouraging long-term adherence to decisions, actions and policies; and
- equipping people to make appropriate changes in their actions as circumstances change (Fien and Skoien 2000).

Educating and building capacity *through* a framework of sustainable consumption tools and strategies is a powerful and proven method for individual empowerment and for fostering sustainable consumption in the wider community (see Case Study 5.2.1). Sustainable consumption is an ideal entry point to a number of youth development activities. In fact, a “doing” or action-based approach to good citizenship may provide the means by which youth issues ensuing from a lack of life purpose/belonging and ambivalence can be mitigated. However, this should not detract from the equal importance of other enabling conditions such as investing in ideas and action, giving a voice to young people and ensuring political support (e.g. sustainability infrastructure) for more sustainable living.

# 4 Empowerment of change agents

## 4.1 Introduction

There is a vast body of literature on developing change agents in society. For instance, Moyer's (1990) "Four Roles of Activism" clearly delineates between effective and ineffective social action and the four roles that people might play in social change: rebel, change agent, reformer and citizen (see Appendix 7). Moyer sees the effective actions of the change agent as:

- builds people power; educates, convinces and involves majority of ordinary citizens;
- puts issue on political agenda;
- forms networks and mass-based organisations;
- promotes strategy for long-term social movement;
- nurtures, supports and empowers activists and grass roots; and
- promotes alternatives and paradigm shifts.

Young people require skills, tools and opportunities if they are to enhance their visibility and increase their influence on the issues that interest them. Youth empowerment activities provide young people with the confidence to take action that influences their life situations. However, it is difficult for young people to become effective agents of change in their communities without appropriate encouragement and support from their communities.

Issues of main concern to young Australians, such as employment, health and the environment, are each highly complex and often confusing matters. Many concerned young people are overwhelmed by the enormity of these impending challenges and step back from the verge of taking personal or collective action because of a lack of confidence and/or knowledge of prevailing youth empowerment strategies.

To be effective, programs for young people should be designed to empower them, as citizens, to see sustainable consumption as a positive contribution to individual, household and community wellbeing and not as a "sacrifice" that will lower standards of living. Thus, the challenge for guiding young people towards sustainable consumption lifestyles is one of **helping them to discover for themselves the changes which are most meaningful for them and helping them to develop the action skills or competence to actually change their consumption patterns** (De Young 1996). An example of this can be seen from a statement made by young people themselves to Ministers at the UNEP Governing Council Meeting on 4 February 2003: "We commit to awareness raising campaigns to lifestyle change at a community level and request governments to further encourage sustainable consumption. We support the UNEP YouthXchange program as an excellent example of work in this field."

This view of empowerment as a strategy for encouraging sustainable consumption is based upon the belief that sustainable consumption is not something that can be imposed upon people but, rather, will only come about as the result of an informed choice in favour of sustainable goods and services by individuals, households, corporations and governments (Robins and Roberts 1998).

Successful education and learning programs for sustainable consumption need to consider at least three key principles for program design:

- programs that just provide information on environmental facts and the need to change or tell people how to behave are ineffective;
- programs should seek to provide an understanding *why* particular changes are important, and help people to explore a range of alternatives in order to find ones that make sense in their own lives, and most importantly; and
- programs should seek to provide opportunities for people to develop and practise skills such as problem-solving and decision-making (Fien and Skoien 2000).

An elaboration on these key principles leads to the development of a sustainable consumption framework for young people. Youth empowerment programs on sustainable consumption should aim to:

#### **Educate**

- educate young people about the impacts of their consumption patterns;
- educate young people about the positives of sustainable consumption;
- educate young people about the importance of teamwork and the power of effective communication; and
- educate young people about their place and the contributions they can make to the global/world community.

#### **Build capacities**

- encourage young people in Australia to critically reflect on the way they, and those around them, live, behave and consume;
- help young people develop leadership skills;
- encourage young people to educate others about sustainable consumption through workshops, discussion groups and campaigns; and
- empower young people to take action to improve their local environment.

#### **Support**

- give young people a voice;
- encourage active citizenship and develop young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities to the wider community; and
- allow young people to set an example of sustainable living and let others follow their example (SA Office for Youth).

Section 4.2 highlights a number of general techniques available to develop young agents of change. Specific tools and strategies for youth action on sustainable consumption are included in Section 4.3.

## **4.2 Techniques for empowering young people**

The following sections identify a range of techniques that young people can employ to become agents of change in their communities. Young Australians are empowered to take action through:

- Training and education
- Media
- Social marketing
- Networking
- Civic participation
- Political participation

Each of the individual techniques has the potential to help young people become agents of change but, as in many policy contexts, a mix of complementary and mutually reinforcing strategies provide the basis for maximum success. Therefore, young people often need training on all of the available strategies, thereby making training and capacity building opportunities the key to the empowerment of change agents in our communities.

### **4.2.1 Training and education**

A popular means by which to empower young people is to provide them with the necessary skills to build their confidence, competency and will to act on certain issues. There are a number of vital areas where young people require training and education, these include:

- personal skill development (e.g. public speaking and report writing);
- project management;
- strategy development;
- role model projects;
- problem solving techniques;

- teamwork; and
- formal education on social issues.

Training and learning opportunities are crucial for developing young change agents. Young people can nowadays seek out training and development opportunities on various strategies and on a wide range of issues.

Formal education often provides students with opportunities to build capacities to engage in teamwork, project management and public speaking. However, young people can also develop personal skills through a number of different avenues. Many youth empowerment strategies are included in well-known schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development, Scouts and Girl Guides, Young Endeavour Youth Scheme, Australian Volunteers International, Oz Quest – Young Australian Adventures and the National Youth Roundtable, which encompasses each of these vital areas. In fact, there are a host of community, State, national and international initiatives that build teamwork, leadership, and other practical skills, while also confronting social issues such as cultural diversity, environmental protection and human and animal rights. For example, *active8 – Premier's Youth Challenge* is a South Australian youth leadership and personal development program that is conducted in partnership with young people, schools and community service providers.

Despite the existence of many opportunities, training programs and initiatives rarely acquire a holistic approach to nurturing young agents of change. However, there are some initiatives that incorporate training on a range of important strategies into their programs. For example, three such initiatives in the environmental field are: The Trust for Young Australians programs for “future leaders” in all capital cities, the Green Steps Program run by the Monash Environment Institute and Youth LEAD (Leadership in Environmental Action Development) operated by Oz Green. Green Steps equips talented young people with the skills, support, inspiration, knowledge and confidence to enter the workforce and facilitate environmental improvement. Oz Green's Youth LEAD is designed to foster in young people the skills, motivation and opportunities to lead the way to a sustainable future. The program trains young people on strategic development, project management, public speaking, problem-solving, teamwork, action planning, networking and participation.

#### 4.2.2 Media

The media plays a central role in shaping the opinions of young people and can therefore be a powerful

outlet for raising awareness and encouraging change on social issues. In fact, on particular issues, such as consumerism, the media itself is considered part of the problem and thus industry representatives must be encouraged to support strategies for change.

Making sure young people are able to identify blatant attempts to entice them to consume out of the thousands of media messages received every week is a major challenge. Hence, training young people to be savvy consumers of media is critical if young people are to be expected to become agents of change for more sustainable consumption (see Kinkade and Macy 2003).

Young people can attract media attention on specific issues with public announcements, press releases, demonstration projects and appearances on community radio and television (see *Generating the News*, by the Queensland Government). For instance, young people and their organisations often attract attention to their causes through the creation of online tools such as web sites and e-newsletters. Young Australians should be encouraged to continue to use their online strengths and combine these efforts with the use of other media tools.

However, writing for the media and participating in other ways takes courage, knowledge, experience and training. Fortunately, there are a number of resources to help young people navigate through their foray into the media. For example, according to Social Change Media's extensive online resources, a media release should include the following content:

- a headline that gets to the core of the story;
- a first paragraph that summarises the story;
- quotable quotes from a credible figure;
- some facts or statistics;
- explanatory details; and
- all-hours contact and phone number and spokesperson details.

#### 4.2.3 Social marketing

Changes to established lifestyles are often difficult to bring about. However, social change is possible, and like many things, values and behaviours conducive to social change need to be marketed. Resources that can help young people market their social change strategies do exist, for example *Fostering Sustainable Behaviour: An Introduction to Community-based Social Marketing* (Boothe 1996) and *Making Health Communication Programs Work – A Planners Guide* (US Department of Health and Human Services 1992). Both of these studies advocate a holistic and participatory approach to social marketing.

GreenCOM is the leading organisation in the world promoting the use of social marketing for sustainability. In Australia, we are well served by Sydney-based Social Change Media that uses the media and other techniques to facilitate behaviour change by increasing the capabilities of individuals and communities. Social Change Media uses a 7 Steps Social Marketing Approach to help clients construct successful social change strategies.

The seven elements are:

- knowledge;
- desire;
- skills;
- optimism;
- facilitation;
- stimulation; and
- reinforcement.

This approach allows users to identify which elements are already being fulfilled, and so concentrate resources on the gaps.

According to Les Robinson of Social Change Media, “an education strategy that actually works, as opposed to one that looks good on paper, is likely to involve a lot more than just communication techniques”. He continues: “If your social marketing mission is to be successful, then as marketers you may need to step outside the conventional boundaries of ‘awareness’ communication. You may have to help people visualise new futures. You may need to work with engineers to build services and infrastructure. You may need to work with politicians and managers to provide leadership. You may need to create a sense of event. And you’ll have to think in the long-term and ensure that resources are available to repeat and reinforce your messages.”

#### 4.2.4 Networking

Sharing news, ideas and progress on important issues via electronic and face-to-face networks helps young people promote change in their communities. Networking provides young people with knowledge and skill-sharing opportunities, critical feedback on projects, and co-operational possibilities within a supportive group environment.

Young Australians have access to established youth networks such as *YouthGAS*, *Youth.Comm* and others operated by organisations like the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) and the Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies (ACYS). There are countless networks on various important social issues in which young people can join and participate. Many youth organisations facilitate their

own e-newsletters and postal and electronic networks, while organisations that train young people often encourage networking between participants. Other networking opportunities for young people include: youth workshops and conferences such as those conducted at National Youth Week; youth committees and councils; web sites and networks operated by various local, State and Territory Governments (e.g. MAZE web site operated by SA Office for Youth) and Australian Government youth initiatives (e.g. The Source).

Networks also exist for a range of specific critical issues (e.g. mental health, youth unemployment); however, outreach is often a problem as many young people are unaware of how to access the opportunities. Moreover, emerging issues such as sustainable consumption are not adequately referred to in community, State/Territory or federal networks.

#### 4.2.5 Civic participation

Young people can gain leadership skills, build confidence and learn about different issues by volunteering for local, State and national charities (e.g. RSPCA and Legacy), participating in youth and social action groups, undertaking internships and other service learning opportunities (e.g. ActNow and Energy Australia Red Cross Youth Challenge) and supporting civil society organisations such as Greenpeace. According to the Profile of Young Australians’ web site hosted by the Foundation of Young Australians there was a marked increase in volunteer activity by 18 to 24-year-olds between 1995 and 2000 from a rate of 17 per cent to 27 per cent.

A recent UK study by the Economic and Social Research Council on *Youth, Citizenship and Social Change* found that of all the young people consulted practically all of them had at some time engaged in constructive social activities. Constructive social participation included:

- sustained voluntary work via a formal agency;
- voluntary work arranged via informal community networks (e.g. helping elderly neighbours);
- informal political action (e.g. campaigns and demonstrations);
- activities with political implications (e.g. events promoting inter-community relations);
- awareness-raising (e.g. challenging racism in conversation);
- altruistic acts (e.g. donating blood); and
- general social participation (e.g. neighbourliness, club-membership).

Despite encouraging signs of increased civic participation by young Australians, more action needs to be taken to broaden the scope of opportunities available to young people. Young people should be encouraged to participate in constructive social activities as this can be a key form of empowerment for them. A recent study conducted by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme titled *Youth and Citizenship* (Manning and Ryan 2004) concluded that most young people expressed concern that they had not been sufficiently educated to be considered competent citizens. Civics education was considered by young people to be the most important process to support young people to be meaningfully involved in society (Manning and Ryan 2004).

#### 4.2.6 Political participation

Youth advocacy and activism can prompt changes in legislation and shifts in public consciousness on social issues, while also inspiring young people to become agents of change. According to the Advocacy Institute, “advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people’s lives”. A range of strategies, tactics and roles – rebel, reformer, change agent and citizen – constitute effective advocacy (Whelan 2003).

Indeed, advocacy is complex and challenging. However, it can be categorised into the following distinct activity areas:

- Public awareness/community education: Speaking to a group about an issue to raise awareness and promote action.
- Letter to the Editor about an issue.
- Meet your legislator and lobby about a specific issue.
- Participate in advocacy rally/press conference etc.
- Attend legislative hearings on your issue and then follow-up with letter to appropriate Legislator (Griffith University 2003).

Lobbying political leaders, attending rallies and demonstrations, writing formal letters and speaking publicly on social issues all take courage. Granted, but the confidence it instils in young people can be immeasurable. Many young Australians take activism seriously and participate on regular occasions. However, it is important to encourage more young people to become involved in these activities.

Clearly both first-timers and experienced advocates benefit from training. Advocates can bring about change more successfully when they develop

knowledge about issues, political “savvy” and big picture thinking, organisational development skills and a toolbox of skills and strategies (Whelan 2003). For instance, Griffith University’s Environmental Advocacy portal provides resources to help Australian advocates of environmental issues.

Young people can become agents of change by harnessing and participating in community, State and federal decision-making structures (e.g. local councils, youth advisory committees and youth parliaments) and by taking formal political participation (voting in elections if 18 or over). Youth participation in social and political decision-making processes ensures young people have a say in decisions that impact on their lives. In the UK, the results of a national review of young people and social action identified over a thousand youth social action groups, involving young people from a broad range of social and ethnic backgrounds (UK Economic and Social Research Council 2002). According to the Foundation of Young Australians, just over one in three young Australians had participated in some form of political activity in the past. Examples of the mechanisms and institutions through which young people are currently involved in community decision-making processes, include:

- campaigning and lobbying;
- development and management of their own organisations;
- participation in and use of the media;
- conference participation;
- youth councils and parliaments;
- research;
- program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- peer support, representation and advocacy;
- policy analysis and development (Wierenga et al. 2003).

A 2004 study on *Youth and Citizenship* by NYARS found that 89 per cent of young people do want to participate in influencing politics and government. According to Ben Manning and Roberta Ryan, authors of the NYARS report, “the methods of participation which were seen to be the most effective were voting in elections, youth and student representative organisations and through community groups. Writing to politicians or newspapers, signing petitions and calling talkback radio were seen to be the least effective”. Another report commissioned by NYARS, *Alive and Motivated: Young People, Participation and Local Government* (Saggers et al. 2004) describes the importance of active youth participation in contemporary youth policy in

Australia. “This is illustrated clearly at the State level, with most governments specifying the importance of participation by young people” (Saggers et al, 2004).

Community organisations, schools, universities and government bodies at all levels offer opportunities for participation by young people. Various resources detail how organisations can improve their youth participation initiatives. A few examples include: *TAKING PARTICIPATION Seriously* by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People; *Youth Participation Handbook for Organisations* by the South Australian Office for Youth; *Queensland Youth Charter* by the Queensland Office of Youth Affairs; *Youth on Board – 14 Points to Involving Young People in Decision Making* by Philanthropy Australia; and *Youth Consultation Research Project* by the NSW Department of Local Government. In fact, there is also information available to better equip young people for intended involvement in decision-making such as the WA Office for Children and Youth publication *Telling the Emperor: A Guide to Youth Participation in Decision-making* and the Foundation of Young Australians’ *Profile of Young Australians* web site (Chapter 12: Participation in Civil Society).

Many State and Territory Government youth offices’ seek the opinions of young people on a range of issues, and offer other empowerment strategies such as grants, awards and training opportunities (e.g. young people can have their say directly on the web site of the WA Office of Children and Youth). Local, State/Territory, and national youth affairs councils and networks (e.g. Youth Network of Tasmania) involve young people and service providers in identifying and responding to youth issues and also provide advice to government and other agencies on youth issues. For example, the Australian Youth Parliament for the Environment (AYPE) is Australia’s peak body working to put youth at the forefront of creating a sustainable future. Young people can also get involved by joining a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). Youth advisory committees discuss local youth issues and provide information and advice to their local council and other interested people on relevant youth issues, so that the views of young people can be incorporated into decision-making in their local community. Activities that youth advisory committees are generally involved in include:

- representing local youth issues;
- providing advice to elected members and council staff;
- consulting with local young people and conducting local youth surveys;
- National Youth Week activities;

- lobbying community decision-makers;
- promoting a positive image of young people (SA Office for Youth).

According to Saggers et al. youth councils or youth advisory committees represent the most common forms of formal participation. The study by Manning and Ryan (2004) found that young people believed programs that encourage youth participation in government and in schools should be more widespread. Many young people who have been involved in formal participation claim to have felt empowered, and a strong correlation exists between involvement in formal participation and a belief that these were effective ways for young people to have influence (Manning and Ryan 2004).

#### 4.2.7 Summary

While there is a number of techniques to enhance the ability for young people to be effective change agents in the wider community, there is little doubt that without critical training and capacity building opportunities across each of these strategies, young people will often lack the skills, confidence, support and knowledge to maintain change-related activities over extended periods of time. Young Australians are certainly increasingly interested in and aware of social and environmental causes, and are often keen to *make* a difference. However, gaining access to or being empowered enough to join established initiatives, or to act alone and commence new activities is often challenging, if not impossible, for many young people. Clearly then, young people require support from their families, schools, workplaces, communities and governments in helping to establish opportunities for them to develop the capacities to realise and access social marketing strategies, use media tools, network, educate and build others’ capacities, and participate in social and political activities.

### 4.3 Sustainable consumption tools and strategies

There are a host of tools and strategies that young people and those supporting young people (e.g. schools and families) can utilise to encourage sustainable consumption. A selection of the options available to individuals, families, institutions and communities are examined below. Some of these tools and strategies have been discussed with and evaluated by young people in the sustainable consumption workshops (see Appendix 2).<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Individuals

Young Australians are able to change consumption

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for a list of sustainable consumption resources and contact details for all the listed tools.

patterns and promote sustainable lifestyles through their own personal actions. These actions may be reflected directly in their purchasing decisions, through resource saving initiatives or by taking steps to encourage others to practice sustainable consumption. A few examples of how young people can take individual action on sustainable consumption include:

- buy environmentally friendly products (e.g. detergents, recycled paper);
- skip a beef meal;
- install power saving light bulbs;
- save resources (e.g. electricity and water in the home);
- recycle paper waste and compost food waste;
- skip a car trip (e.g. walk);
- make products last (e.g. mobile phone);
- sell or donate unwanted products instead of throwing them away;
- stop junk mail (e.g. advertising brochures);
- use reusable products (e.g. plastic drink bottle);
- keep a daily consumption log/journal; and
- join a Planet Ark campaign.

Indeed, there are many more ideas for action (see for example [www.ibuydifferent.org](http://www.ibuydifferent.org)). Even though some young people already act sustainably in these ways, most young people tend to be unaware of the extent of the social and environmental damage caused by their consumption and also often lack the skills and knowledge to get involved.

That is why informative tools such as the Ecological Footprint Analysis have been so successful in encouraging young people to take action. The Ecological Footprint is a measure of the human impact on nature – it shows how much productive land and water we use to produce all the resources we consume and to take in all the waste we make. An Ecological Footprint Analysis is an innovative and rigorous way of measuring whether the impacts of our lifestyle choices are sustainable. The ecological footprint exercise improves young people's knowledge of their environmental impact and empowers them to take action to remedy any unsustainable behaviour.

Reading about sustainable consumption issues is another way young people are inspired to take action. There are many texts and magazines that inform about sustainable consumption, consumerism and the coercive power of corporations and the media. For instance, popular books that have reached thousands of young readers worldwide include Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2000), Alicia Quart's

*Branded* (2003) and Kalle Lasn's *Culture Jam* (2000). All three books highlight how young people are taken advantage of by the media and corporations in a selfish pursuit of profit and market share. The monthly *Adbusters* magazine is another similar source for such information. It includes philosophical articles as well as activist commentary from around the world addressing issues ranging from genetically modified foods to media concentration.

Certainly, if young people want to encourage others to follow their lead in a quest for more sustainable living they need to develop skills and leadership credentials. Training and capacity building opportunities on sustainable consumption are clearly limited in Australia. The capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents program designed for this project is arguably the first such initiative to be trialled in Australia (see Section 5.2.1). However, some training programs such as the Monash Environment Institute's *Green Steps* program and Oz Green's *Youth LEAD* program both empower young people in the broader context of environmental protection and personal improvement. Other Australian programs such as *Future Leaders* and the *Youth to Youth Training Workshops* provide inspiration and personal skill development opportunities. Young people can also build confidence and knowledge by participating in such initiatives as the Sustainable Living Competition and the yearly Eco-Innovate conferences at the University of New South Wales. The Sustainable Living Competition rewards high school students for environmental projects undertaken in the classroom or individually.

Joining existing networks or establishing new sustainable consumption networks or organisations is another way young people can learn how to become involved in sustainable consumption activities. Although there is a definite need for networks that concentrate on sustainable consumption in Australia, young people can discuss sustainable consumption issues in the UNEP Tunza Asia Pacific network, Eco-Innovate 03 conference forums (UNSW), the Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN), Student Environment Activism Network (SEAN) and at the yearly Students of Sustainability conferences.

### 4.3.2 Family

Sustainable consumption tools and strategies are often designed especially for households. The household sector is responsible for energy use, waste disposal, and purchasing decisions that affect the sustainability of consumption. Young people have a major influence over these household patterns, and therefore with appropriate support from parents can encourage sustainable consumption.

The *Conscious Consumer* web site and the *More Fun, Less Stuff Starter Kit* are two examples of resources designed by the Centre for a New American Dream (CNAD) for families in the United States to use when adopting more sustainable consumption patterns. The resources provide suggested tips for saving energy in the home and for buying products that are less harmful to the environment. Australian families have at their disposal green shopping guides (e.g. RMIT Green Purchasing Resource); State and national government information guides on resource saving measures (e.g. household water efficiency); various local council programs on recycling (e.g. glass and paper); sustainable household building and improvement options (e.g. solar heating); and information guides on where to find organic and fair trade products (e.g. Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Shops).

Young people acting within households can also encourage the transfer of the family unit toward more sustainable lifestyles. Many young Australians share a well-developed critique of materialism (Pocock 2004) and believe that their parents do not spend enough time with them. Therefore, parents often relinquish their guilt by buying consumer goods for their children. The result of which is increased material household consumption. Downshifting – working and spending less – is clearly not an option for many young people and their families. But for some, an improvement in the family's quality of life (e.g. parents spending more time with their children and less time at work) may placate some of the demand for household purchases of goods and services (see Hamilton 2003).

### 4.3.3 Institutions

Education and empowerment activities for sustainable consumption are key responsibilities of the institutions that involve and nurture young people (e.g. schools, universities, TAFEs, workplaces). While sustainable consumption education resources for Australian schools and universities are not widely available, there are an increasing number of tools and resources available to educators (e.g. ecological footprint analysis).

In 2002, after almost four years of research and stakeholder consultation – primarily with young people – UNEP and UNESCO recognised the need to develop a training kit on responsible consumption for young people. *YouthXchange: Towards Sustainable Lifestyles* is designed to help youth groups, NGOs, and educators to raise awareness of sustainable consumption issues, offer examples of more sustainable purchasing choices, and most importantly empower young people to put theory into practice.

This tool (Training Guide and Interactive web site), launched at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, September 2002), is just one of the prevailing strategies that institutions in Australia can implement in order to foster young agents of change for sustainable consumption. The program encourages young people in six basic ways:

- Giving information and “branding” the idea of a more sustainable lifestyle as “cool” rather than needed, “smart” rather than “responsible” and in line with the increasingly advertised, health conscious, politically correct, spiritually orientated behaviour that fashion magazines and the media report.
- Stimulating the natural need in all of us, but youth in particular, to prove our own independence by making an autonomous choice and having their opinions heard.
- Giving examples of how a combination of legislation and public pressure for environmental protection and social justice is already, albeit not quickly enough, changing the way companies behave.
- Offering tools to people to assess how far companies are going in their sustainability policy and to easily recognise and choose products that already are sustainable.
- Inviting young people to realise that their action can actually change things and providing that through case studies.
- Promoting the idea of networking and communication as a means for becoming a global citizen and making youth requests for a more sustainable lifestyle options and infrastructure a strong and solid market driver.

A wide range of American teaching resources on sustainable consumption have also emerged in the past five years. These education for sustainable consumption resources include: *Changing Consumption Patterns: An Integrated Curriculum for High Schools* (Sustainability Education Centre), *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* (Northwest Environment Watch), *Living in a Material World: Lessons on Commercialism, Consumption and Environment* (CNAD), *Affluenza* and *Escape from Affluenza* (Public Broadcasting Station), *The Clothes Line* (Oxfam Fair Trade teaching resource), *Sustainability Education Handbook* (Urban Options) and an upcoming joint-initiative by CNAD and WWF to develop a sustainable consumption curriculum for primary school students. Australian institutions would be well advised to review many of these tools and emulate some of the strategies in new courses and initiatives tailor-made for young Australians.

Indeed, several Australian education resources that promote sustainable consumption and address topics such as consumerism have been produced already. For instance, the National Association of Development Education Centre Broadsheet No. 9 entitled *Living Sustainably: Issues, Classroom Activities and Teaching Resources for Primary and Secondary* teaches young people how to tread more lightly on the Earth (see Global Learning Centre, Qld.). The Multimedia teacher education program developed by Griffith University for UNESCO called *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* includes an interactive teaching module on sustainable consumption that includes such activities as ecological footprint analysis.

The Australian Government also supports a range of activities that promote sustainable consumption principals to young people through the Environmental Education Section of the Department of the Environment and Heritage.<sup>7</sup> For example, the Australian Government has committed \$2m to the Sustainable Schools Initiative (SSI). The SSI integrates sustainability education into a holistic program with measurable environmental, economic, educational and social outcomes. The SSI seeks improvement in the way schools manage resources (e.g. energy, water, waste, products and materials) and school grounds (e.g. biodiversity, landscape design) and integrate this approach into existing curriculum and school operations. The initiative is action based and involves the whole school community in the sustainable management of the school. The incorporation and involvement of the school's local community is an important element of the initiative. The SSI is built upon an understanding of systems approaches and the need to influence systems if change is to be sustainable.

The SSI addresses many of the general themes for sustainable consumption policy development highlighted in the United Nations Sustainable Consumption Guidelines. At the time this NYARS project occurred, funds totalling \$780,000 had been expended on this initiative. A pilot of the initiative commenced in NSW and Victorian primary and secondary schools in 2002. Funding had also been provided to Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. In recognition of the SSI, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, announced in August 2004 the latest round of SSI funds and launched the WA SSI in Perth. Discussions with the other States and Territories had commenced and funding would be provided to the ACT and NT in the near future.

To ensure the initiative is consistent in all States and Territories, the National Environmental Education Network (NEEN) had compiled the common elements

of a SSI. The elements allow flexibility for States and Territories to ensure the initiative addresses local and State needs. A set of indicators to record the environmental, educational, economic and social outcomes of the initiative had been developed in consultation with Government, agency, industry and business representatives.

NSW and South Australia have incorporated student leadership programs into their SSI and the NEEN Sustainable Schools Working group is investigating further development of student leadership programs in the context of Sustainable Schools. Each State and Territory will be developing a sustainable schools web site. NSW and Victoria have commenced construction of their web sites. In addition to information about the SSI, the web site will provide information and strategies on how to live more sustainable lifestyles including issues around sustainable consumption.

The Initiative links with other national sustainable schools programs through Australia's representation on the Environment and School Initiatives (ENSI) under the umbrella of the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (OECD-CERI). Representatives from countries with similar sustainability programs are represented on ENSI including Hungary, Austria and Sweden. The NEEN has commenced discussions on possible activities for the SSI for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development that commences in 2005.

The National Environmental Education Council (NEEC) – a non-statutory body, which provides expert advice on environmental education to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage – has established working groups in industry, further and higher education, schools, and youth/community sectors and is working in each area on greater integration of sustainability into formal and non-formal learning activities. The Council is currently considering options for Australia's level of engagement with the UN Decade. Indeed, the UN Decade presents a number of opportunities for building multi-stakeholder partnerships to further expand training and capacity building programs that develop sustainable consumption change agents.

The Australian Government has committed \$1.8m to environmental education research and contracted Macquarie University's Australian Research Institute in Education for Sustainability (ARIES) to undertake research to support the National Action Plan for Environmental Education. Under the arrangement, ARIES is responsible for researching and developing practical approaches to enhancing environmental

<sup>7</sup> Staff members from DEH were very helpful in providing this information on the Department's environmental education activities.

education in a range of sectors, aligned with Government priorities. Some of the future projects will explore new ground and could include an examination of community approaches to sustainable consumption.

The Curriculum Corporation ([www.curriculum.edu.au](http://www.curriculum.edu.au)) has been engaged to develop a National Environmental Education Statement for Schools. The Statement will focus on education for the environment and learning for sustainability. Issues pertaining to sustainability, such as consumption, will be addressed in the statement.

The Australian Government's main overarching web site that outlines various commitments to young people is The Source initiative ([www.thesource.gov.au](http://www.thesource.gov.au)). Although sustainable consumption is not recognised as a specific activity area on the web site, several SC principles are addressed through sections on health and wellbeing and through initiatives such as the Young Australian of the Year (environmental award). There is an opportunity to integrate sustainable consumption activities and programs across each of the existing activity areas.

Considerable initiatives are also underway in further and higher education. These include integrating sustainability processes into water, energy and sometimes design and construction policies. Several universities have signed international charters such as the Talloires Declaration which require a commitment to advancing sustainability through both such operational procedures and academic programs. Australian Campuses Towards Sustainability holds an annual conference to support such initiatives while the National VET Research and Evaluation Research Program has funded a project to identify the common ground between TAFE priorities and sustainability. The challenge for universities will be to try and foster sustainable consumption on campuses as a new way of living rather than just through the teaching of sustainability.

Institutions can also encourage young people to act as change agents for sustainable consumption such as supporting student environment groups and societies. A further measure is to directly involve young people in sustainable practices, similar to the way the Sustainable Schools Initiative operates. For example, the Waste Wise Schools program is an initiative of EcoRecycle Victoria that assists Victorian schools to minimise waste and reduce litter (see the Gould Institute). In NSW and the ACT, the School Communities Recycling All Paper (SCRAP) organisation operates recycling and reusing projects in over 2,000 schools, universities, child care centres, non-profit and government bodies.

#### 4.3.4 Community

Young people's concern for the environment often leads them to join forces with their peers in environmental organisations and to participate in group initiatives. Indeed, there is evidence that today young Australians are participating in social initiatives (e.g. environment, human rights) and volunteering for community service more than ever. For example, according to the Foundation for Young Australians, of all the young people in Australia involved in clubs and societies almost 20 per cent of them participate in environment groups.

Clearly there are a host of ways that young people can become involved in their communities and act as agents of change for sustainable consumption. The *Community Action Guide* published by the Centre for a New American Dream lists over 50 actions for young people and their organisations. The first 15 actions are outlined below as an example of the content:

- Develop a green shopping guide for your community.
- Organise a consumer festival.
- Sponsor a contest to Save Trees by Getting Creative with Paper.
- Conduct an energy audit.
- Organise a "Don't Can Your Can" campaign.
- Organise a "Buy Better" campaign.
- Create a green cleaning products "recipe book".
- Sell holiday greeting cards made from homemade paper.
- Organise a green gift-wrapping station in a local shopping centre.
- Organise a paper-recycling event after the holidays.
- Mount a green advertising campaign.
- Hold a T-shirt swap or sale.
- Hold a CD or video game exchange.
- Organise a collection for a local thrift store or charity.
- Organise a car pool system for your school.

Many youth groups are specifically taking up the challenge of encouraging sustainable consumption in their communities. However, while very few youth groups concentrate efforts on sustainable consumption per se, the major issues (e.g. environment, fair trade, economic and social justice, health and materialism) of sustainable consumption are priorities of many of these organisations. For instance, the Youth Environment Society conducts projects on The 3 R's (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle) and the Urban Tripper project encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Young Australians and their organisations that promote fair trade and organic products, boycott products that are tested on animals or reject products that affect human health and the environment are also supporting core sustainable consumption principles. Often, however, young people lack the information required to get them started. Local Sustainability Guides such as the Australian National University's (ANU) *Green Guide* are important tools for encouraging young people to think about and act on sustainable consumption. The ANU *Green Guide* is a resource that provides information to help all residents of Canberra to learn how to live more responsibly. It includes tips on how to save energy, where to shop for sustainable products and how to get involved in community action.

Social marketing strategies for sustainable consumption such as those devised by Adbusters and Social Change Media provide opportunities for young people to encourage others to change their behaviour by using the power of the media and other techniques. For instance, Social Change Media provides resources for young people interested in how to access the media and how to learn to design sustainable consumption media campaigns. Adbusters designs slogans and messages that counter common consumerist messages. Annual worldwide initiatives organised by Adbusters, including TV Turnoff Week and Buy Nothing Day, can be further promoted by young people's organisations, civil society and community institutions and government bodies as mechanisms for promoting more sustainable consumption and highlighting SC-related issues.

Local, State and Territory Governments and civil society organisations are also involved in encouraging participation by young people in sustainable consumption issues. For example, Australian initiatives such as the Sustainable Living Project, Clean Up Australia, Planet Ark, Green Corps, Eco-Innovate forums, Natural Step "Sustainability Made Easy" program, Natural Edge Project ([www.naturaledgeproject.net/](http://www.naturaledgeproject.net/)), Local Agenda 21 programs (e.g. South Australia), Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand activities, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, World Vision Australia ([www.onebigvillage.com.au](http://www.onebigvillage.com.au)), International Youth Parliament and Youth LEAD all promote various elements of sustainable consumption. Indeed, but there is a need to empower young people to take holistic action on sustainable consumption as exemplified by international sustainable consumption projects such as the UNEP-UNESCO YouthXchange initiative.

Youth Environment Councils (e.g. in South Australia) and other initiatives such as the Australian Youth Parliament for the Environment's ECO-civics program

raise awareness on various environmental issues around Australia. However, these initiatives should be encouraged to adopt sustainable consumption as central themes for their activities.

### 4.3.5 Youth policy

While no national youth policy on sustainable consumption exists, many federal and State/Territory policies aid the development of sustainable consumption initiatives for young people. Everyday sustainable consumption-related activities that young people can be exposed to such as recycling and green purchasing guides are directly sponsored by the different levels of government. Some of the Australian sustainable consumption tools and strategies discussed in this report have been inspired by government policies or programs on sustainable consumption, environment and youth empowerment. The South Australian Government for example, has signalled its interest in sustainable consumption by commissioning a discussion paper on young people and sustainable consumption in 2000.

State and Territory Governments can take a further step toward promoting sustainable consumption issues to young people. Sustainable consumption issues can be recognised by youth charters and youth policies. For instance, the South Australian Youth Action Plan that is currently being developed to help provide a whole of Government approach to young people will identify a number of key goals stemming from six core State-wide objectives. Two of the six objectives – "improving wellbeing" and "attaining sustainability" – are important components of sustainable consumption, while "fostering creativity" and "expanding opportunity" are linked to youth empowerment.

Most State and Territory youth policies or youth charters are concerned with youth development. In recent years, the empowerment of young people has become an increasingly important focus area for many State and Territory Governments. For example, empowerment is one of the key principles of the Northern Territory Youth Policy Framework that has been developed to underpin policies, programs and service delivery for young people. However, although many State and Territory Governments have countless policies and programs in place to empower young people – including the many youth councils, networks and programs discussed in the sections above – not enough has been done to address sustainability issues within these general youth development programs. There is much scope for incorporating sustainable consumption into existing youth policies and programs that empower young people. For instance, sustainable consumption could

be included as a major future theme of the National Youth Roundtable. This study has argued that young people believe participation is important for them to encourage others to consume more sustainably. Although, State and Territory Governments such as South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory have generated youth participation resources, there is little evidence of linkages being made between active participation and sustainability issues.

#### 4.3.6 Integrated strategies

As is evident from the discussion above, there are many individual tools and strategies to help young people change their consumption patterns and to encourage them to promote sustainable lifestyles in their communities. Outside of school curriculum options such as those available from North America, there is little that engages young people in learning over time of the various elements of sustainable consumption and effective community action and civic participation. Certainly in Australia, there are many programs and projects such as the Sustainable Schools Initiative that cover some of the issues relevant to sustainable consumption and that seek to give young people the skills they need to be effective community change agents, and even to make change in their own lives. While each individual program has its strengths and successes, overall, the social, community and environmental impact may be enhanced by a less fragmented approach and the development of more integrated strategies that focus on youth development and community change through a lens of achieving more sustainable consumption.

The approach taken by the NYARS project team to its capacity building program is very much informed by thinking about developing integrated strategies to young people becoming agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities. Sustainable consumption as an “issue” and driver of change lends itself very well to such a

treatment because of the breadth of social, economic and environmental issues that it relates to. Young sustainable consumption change agents have a large challenge and any number of possible approaches to making positive changes. There are not many skill or competency areas commonly discussed in youth development or enterprise skills circles that are not necessary for young Australians to have at least some knowledge and mastery of if they are to be effective change agents in the area of sustainable consumption. The same can be said of the generic change agent development process and tools mentioned in section 4.2.

The Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents program that is discussed in Section 5.2.1 and Appendix 2 is a model for introducing young people to the concept of sustainable consumption, providing some signposts towards further education, training and action, and equipping them with some basic tools and support systems for them to start “being change agents”. The workshops with young people attempt to facilitate and focus internal motivation and collective commitments to take action on any one (or many) of the issues related to sustainable consumption. It includes, in some form, every strategy and change area discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3. The project team recognises that sustainable consumption is perhaps “just another issue that young people can be excited and motivated by” and that the underpinning skills for success in being change agents in this field are those, ideally, that every young Australian would possess. As such, the integrated strategy modelled in the capacity building program, and indeed any other integrated strategies relating to sustainable consumption, may offer an introduction and organising model for the delivery of the many youth education, training and development and community and personal change programs in Australia with the ultimate goal and outcome of developing young Australians as effective leaders and participants in a more just and sustainable Australia and world.

# 5 Good practice

## 5.1 Introduction to case studies

This section documents a range of good practice case studies from Australia and from other countries. The case studies were selected to reflect a range of Australian and international examples, and with an emphasis on those that the research team believes have the most potential to successfully empower young people in Australia to be agents of change to influence peer and community consumption patterns. Each of the case studies concludes with a brief discussion of implications for action in Australia. A summary of the case studies is included in Section 2.6.

All case studies have been grouped into the following four general categories: (1) training and education, (2) web sites, (3) networks and programs, and (4) other tools. The categories are designed to improve navigation for readers as they peruse the wide range of tools and strategies available, and clearly emphasise some of the main priority areas for empowering sustainable consumption change agents. However, many of the initiatives encompass elements inherent in a number of the chosen categories and therefore the categories should act merely as a general guide.

The project team's own Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia project for young people is the first case study to be

discussed. Other case studies highlight some of the ways in which various stakeholders are promoting sustainable consumption to young people. These case studies have been chosen after extensive sustainable consumption literature and program reviews conducted for this report. The case studies are:

### Training and education

- Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia.
- Changing Consumption Patterns – An Integrated Curriculum for High Schools.
- The Clothes Line – Oxfam Fair Trade Teaching Resource.

### Web sites

- UNESCO–UNEP YouthXchange: Towards Sustainable Lifestyles.
- National YouthXchange Program in Korea.
- Be, Live, Buy Different Campaign.
- Urban Tripper.

### Networks and programs

- Sustainable Living Competition.
  - Eco-Innovate 03 Forum.
  - Planet Ark.
  - Waste Recycling in Schools.
-

### Other tools

- Social Marketing for Sustainable Consumption.
- Bigfoot – Ecological Footprint Calculator.
- ANU Green Guide.

## 5.2 Training and education

### 5.2.1 Capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents in Australia

The project team developed and conducted a capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents in Australia program as part of the NYARS funded research (see Appendix 2 for a full discussion of this program). The program is designed to provide and test a model for how to achieve the underlying goal of the research project – Australian young people being equipped as agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities.

A pilot workshop for the program was conducted as part of Eco-Innovate 03, which was held in Sydney in July 2003. Based on the evaluation of this pilot, observations of Eco-Innovate 03, analysis of the literature, and the experience of the project team, an initial program design was implemented in Bendigo, the Mornington Peninsula, Brisbane and Adelaide throughout March and April 2004.

The program consists of two components:

- (1) a train-the-trainer workshop – for youth (peer) leaders and people from organisations that work directly with young people; and
- (2) a youth workshop – for young people who are interested in learning about sustainable consumption and developing their knowledge and skills for taking action towards more sustainable consumption in their communities.

#### The train-the-trainer workshop

AIMS: The aims of the train-the-trainer workshop are to:

1. Develop capacity in local youth leaders and those who work with young people to run the programs' youth workshops – in full or in part – as part of their organisations ongoing activities or as a new initiative in that local community.
2. Encourage the adoption and inclusion of sustainable consumption issues and activities in local youth and community programs and initiatives.
3. Equip and facilitate local people to support

and mentor youth-led action arising from the youth workshop.

ACTIVITIES: The train-the-trainer workshop introduces the program, its purpose, and runs through the youth workshop process (including the sustainable consumption workbook and other resources presented in the youth workshop). Participants that will attend the youth workshop discuss what roles they will take on, e.g. co-facilitator, rapporteur. Options and possibilities for follow-up to the youth workshop are explored and initial roles assigned, i.e. resource coordinator. All workshop participants are added to a national email list and get access to a collection of online materials to assist ongoing activities and support after the youth workshop. Some hard copy sustainable consumption resources (e.g. videos, brochures, publications) that can be used in further education and training with young people are left with the nominated resource coordinator(s).

#### The youth workshop

AIMS: The aims of the youth workshop are to:

1. Educate and raise awareness amongst workshop participants about sustainable consumption issues globally and locally, and present individual and group strategies for addressing unsustainable consumption.
2. Develop individual and group action plans for participants to implement in their communities.
3. Present a range of tools and strategies to young people that can assist them in taking leadership and initiating projects to move their communities and themselves towards more sustainable consumption.

ACTIVITIES: The workshop begins with some form of ice-breaker or warm up activity – determined by the facilitator dependent on group size and dynamics – to get participants to interact with each other and ready to participate. The facilitator introduces the workshop and its purpose, and, following a general discussion about “what is sustainable consumption” – led by the facilitator and drawing on the knowledge and understanding of the participants – the young people share their reasons for attending the workshop and what they want to get out of participating. The workshop then utilises a selection of tools and strategies to increase participants' understanding of sustainable consumption issues and the range of projects and initiatives being undertaken by young people all over the globe (and in Australia) to help achieve more sustainable consumption. Activities emphasise fun and interactivity, and achieve a

balance between information delivery, abstract thinking, group discussions, visual learning and creative expression. The workshop concludes with participants committing to three actions towards more individual and/or community sustainable consumption and brainstorming how these actions might be best implemented. All participants take home a workbook that is utilised throughout the workshop as a record and reminder of their insights and action commitments, as well as being a guide to additional resources and opportunities they can explore in their own time.

### Learning from implementation and recommendations for the future

The youth workshop is effective in taking young Australians from having no, or very little, understanding of sustainable consumption to the point where they have concrete ideas and high motivation to initiate and contribute to actions to achieve more sustainable consumption in their own lives and in their communities. Those with more advanced knowledge in the area also find the workshop valuable in highlighting the importance of lifestyle decisions, in showing new areas for community action, and reinvigorating a commitment to making a positive difference.

Despite the focus of the program on stimulating action from the youth workshops, and the convening of the train-the-trainer workshops to assist this process, most participants in both workshops found it difficult to implement any of their desired actions in the weeks immediately after participating in the program. Some individual lifestyle changes were achieved (e.g. reducing meat consumption), yet community level activities tended to be constrained by such things as a lack of time, inadequate resources, uncertainty about how to actually start, limited confidence in their ability to make a difference, competing agendas (e.g. work or study commitments), and insufficient encouragement and engagement of peers.

Recommendations for improving the program to better facilitate youth action, based on the evaluations and youth and train-the-trainer workshop participants' suggestions, include:

- providing workshop participants with kits to take away after the workshops that included individual copies of all the resources, materials for sharing the workshop information with other people (i.e. PowerPoint files, copies of the abuser postcards), and electronic versions of as many of the resources as possible;
- sending out summaries of the workshop

discussions to all participants, along with all participant contact details;

- including planning in the workshops for follow-up meetings and educating and talking with others; and
- convening the train-the-trainer workshop a few weeks to a month prior to the youth workshop, and then facilitating a follow-up train-the-trainer session after the youth workshop to share learning and plan future activities.

### Implications for Australia:

1. Although they have potential for achieving sustainability, youth development and active citizenship outcomes, holistic programs that develop inspiration and competency for effective individual and community action towards more sustainable consumption in Australian young people are not readily available.
2. Awareness and information workshops need to be complimented by well-resourced and designed *local* support processes that allow experiential learning on how to take action on sustainable consumption.
3. Provision of financial enablers and incentives for young people and local support/youth organisations can help to overcome barriers such as motivation, time poverty, and associated project costs.
4. Training for young people requires capacity building for local support/youth organisations to both integrate sustainable consumption practice in to existing missions and programs, as well as how to support action competence development in young people.

### 5.2.2 Changing consumption patterns – an integrated curriculum for high schools

There are a number of resources Australian teachers can use to educate young people about sustainable consumption issues. These include, environmental education curricula and school activities provided by Environment Australia and the Australian Association for Environmental Education, and tools such as the Global Learning Centre's *Living Sustainably: Issues, Classroom Activities and Teaching Resources for Primary and Secondary*. However, to the best of the author's knowledge there does not exist an Australian teaching unit that concentrates specifically on sustainable consumption.

A few examples in other countries include *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things* and *Living in a Material World: Lessons on Commercialism, Consumption and Environment*. However, a new three-week companion curriculum on consumption, *Changing Consumption Patterns*, developed by the Sustainability Education Center and The Center for the Study of Expertise in Teaching and Learning, is the most detailed and up-to-date resource available.

The consumption unit can be used to help students gain a thorough understanding of sustainability, and provides a profound exploration of consumption as an international sustainability issue and as a facet of the students' own lives. The unit can be used as a stand-alone activity, or can enhance a Model UN CSD simulation (with consumption as the Agenda 21 issue to be explored). Students learn about consumerism, sustainability and taking action in three interactive modules:

- Module One: Caring About Consumption.
- Module Two: Take a Walk!
- Module Three: Bringing Lessons Home.

See Appendix 1 for further information.

#### Implications for Australia

1. No stand-alone sustainable consumption teaching units/curricula in Australia.
2. International teaching units need to be tailored for use in Australia.
3. All stakeholders need to be made aware of the benefits of teaching sustainable consumption core principles to young people.
4. It may be possible to link teaching units on SC to existing teacher education programs such as the Sustainable Living Project.
5. New topics such as the utilisation of sustainability as a driver of innovation can be explored and included in SC curricula.

### 5.2.3 The Clothes Line – Oxfam fair trade teaching resource

Oxfam's large online resource for teachers and schools provides a wide range of teaching materials on education for sustainable development topics. One particular segment on Food, Trade and Globalisation, includes materials on fair trade. Teaching units such as *Go Bananas!*, *Get Global*, *Making a Meal of it!* and *The Clothes Line* discuss issues such as the life cycle of products, fair trade and sustainable production and consumption.

For instance, *The Clothes Line* is a resource for use with 7–13-year-olds. *The Clothes Line* offers a detailed example of the people who play a part in making the clothes we wear and traces the development of a finished garment from the cotton in the field to a UK shop. In particular this material supports the teaching of English, History and Geography/Local Studies. The teaching unit is available at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/clothesline/index.htm>

Oxfam also supports fair trade in other ways such as through their *Make Trade Fair Campaign* and the *Big Noise* petition. The *Make Trade Fair Campaign* gives consumers an opportunity to use their purchasing power to support small-scale farmers and producers in developing countries.

More information on Oxfam's fair trade initiatives can be found at <http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file=2503200211113.htm>

#### Implications for Australia

1. Expand fair trade activities in Australia including consumer information about fair trade product labelling, possibly as part of a broader SC product labelling promotion initiative.
2. Incorporate fair trade teaching units in sustainability courses at all levels of education in Australia.

## 5.3 Web sites

### 5.3.1 YouthXchange: Towards sustainable lifestyles

*YouthXchange: Towards Sustainable Lifestyles* is a training kit on responsible consumption for young people developed by UNESCO and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). *YouthXchange* has been designed to help youth groups, NGOs, and educators raise awareness of sustainable consumption issues, offer examples of more sustainable purchasing choices, and most importantly empower young people to put theory into practice.<sup>8</sup> The initiative, originally launched in 2002 at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), should be completed in late 2004. The *YouthXchange* training resource is made up of two components:

1. A **guide** (printed and web-based) representing a road map to the issues involved, such as: the links between production and consumption, sustainable shopping (eco-labels, consumer choice, etc.), mobility and waste (packaging, re-use, recycling, etc.), energy saving, water use and health (food safety, personal lifestyles, etc.), labour conditions (child labour, toxic processes,

<sup>8</sup> Case Study compiled from information provided by Ms Isabella Marras (UNEP, Paris) and from materials available at <http://www.youthxchange.net>

etc.), and media literacy (understanding advertising, films, music, etc.).

2. A **web site** which aims to have the following content:

- **Trainer's room:** A site map to facilitate the best use of the web site. Along with the brochure, it is a basic tool for teachers, young leaders, NGOs, etc. to implement and develop contents and practical demonstrations on sustainable consumption.
- **Facts and figures atlas:** Interactive, facts and figures visualises key statistics on consumption patterns throughout the world, demonstrates the imbalances in consumption and demand patterns across the globe and also deals with issues related to under-consumption.
- **Best practices:** An analysis of a limited number of case studies of companies, institutions and NGOs to help students and trainers select the most effective approaches towards sustainable consumption. The end result of this section is a set of concise and practical guidelines. This is one of the training-kit's main features.
- **Test and game:** Interactive tests to aid the promotion of awareness on broader issues such as energy saving, recycling, nutritional basics, media literacy, etc. This section is intended to deal with sustainable consumption in a more entertaining way, such as a series of quizzes, which tests the user's growing knowledge and awareness on the issues linked to sustainable consumption.
- **Job opportunities:** This showcases successful youth-led projects, showing young people that their actions can make a difference. This section provides information to guide users on employment, travel and voluntary work worldwide.
- **The ten basics:** Ten basic principles that enable the trainer or any user to address issues directly through young people's interests. It also makes visible what is meant by working towards a sustainable community.
- **FAQs:** A list of frequently asked questions on sustainable consumption and young consumers' rights provides concise descriptions of key environmental/social issues such as: LCA (Life Cycle Assessment), waste management, green design, energy saving, child labour, etc.
- **Links:** A list of interesting web sites grouped by specific issues, with a concise description.

The YouthXchange project is closely aligned to work being carried out for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Sustainable consumption is one of the key action themes for the UN Decade. YouthXchange is already listed among the tools the decade will recommend globally for education for sustainable development and, in particular, for sustainable consumption.

The delivery mechanism of YouthXchange is mainly via train-the-trainer sessions. The main delivery agents for YouthXchange will be educators and NGOs such as youth or consumer NGOs. The YouthXchange project needs local and culturally oriented implementation. Aside from some international train-the-trainer workshops (e.g. EU pilot training sessions in 2005), UNEP and UNESCO plan on only providing the training tools and initial inspiration and guidance for national implementation.

For this reason, **the participation of national organisations or national governments is essential in the delivery of the message at the local level.**

All YouthXchange partners so far are organisations working toward the implementation of the project at the local level and usually integrate the guide into other ongoing projects or use it as an inspiration for new ones. National YouthXchange programs have been initiated in countries like China, Korea (see next Case Study), Mexico and Germany.<sup>9</sup> YouthXchange materials have thus far been translated into Portuguese, Chinese, Catalan and Italian. Griffith University and the International Young Professionals Foundation aim to be the key representatives and official partners of UNEP and UNESCO for development of an Australian YouthXchange web site and accompanying training workshops. Although an official YouthXchange–Australia web site has yet to be awarded funding, the global YouthXchange materials have been used successfully in consultations with young Australians under the auspices of this project (see Case Study 5.2.1).

#### Implications for Australia

1. YouthXchange is highly relevant to Australian youth, but Australian governments have yet to have any major involvement with the international initiative. However, the Australian Consumers Association (ACA) by way of its relationship with Consumers International (CI) is indirectly involved in the project.
2. Thus far, only one case study from Australia is included in the large global list of sustainable consumption case studies.

<sup>9</sup> See the German Consumer Association initiative on young people and sustainable consumption.

### 5.3.2 National YouthXchange program in Korea

The Government of the Republic of Korea is amongst the leaders of those governments that promote sustainable youth lifestyles. Through support of initiatives carried out by the Citizens' Alliance for Consumer Protection of Korea (CACPK), the government has signalled its intention to help young Koreans find ways to change their consumption patterns.<sup>10</sup>

CACPK's first sustainable consumption youth camp, held in Seoul from 18–20 August 2003, brought together over 80 young people from all over Korea. The youth camps are considered part of an intensive education and empowerment program on youth and sustainable consumption. The youth camps give young people the opportunity to critically reflect on their current lifestyles and to empower them to become change agents for sustainable consumption. Young people at the first youth camp declared that it was difficult to find practical ways to consume sustainably and even harder to remain sustainable in the long term. However, young people agreed that they were key agents for promoting changes in the lifestyles of other age groups and were committed to take action in the future. The CACPK Youth Camp participants issued a joint statement at the end of the event. The participants of the youth camp proclaimed that they would:

- be responsible consumers and follow a sustainable and healthy lifestyle;
- protect and conserve the environment;
- promote sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles and to help educate other young people and children;
- encourage the government to create policies that support sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles; and
- participate in environmental programs and activities and strengthen youth participation and involvement.

The follow-up activities of the youth camp included the formation of the Green Youth Consumer Alliance (GYCA) and associated management committee, a small grants program for organisations to conduct sustainable consumption projects and a national-level YouthXchange web site modelled on the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange initiative. The Korean YouthXchange web site provides young people with tips for becoming a sustainable consumer, examples of methods to inspire community-wide changes in consumption patterns and an online network to ensure the ongoing support of like-minded

individuals and organisations such as CACPK. The Korean YouthXchange web site is online at <http://www.youthxchange.org>. A second sustainable consumption youth camp is scheduled to take place in late 2004.

#### Implications for Australia

1. There is no YouthXchange web site currently planned for implementation in Australia. An Australian program could provide information on tips for sustainable living, a small grants program as well as a directory of related organisations and programs.
2. Young people in Australia would clearly benefit from a similar national initiative to that expressed by the Korean consumer association.

### 5.3.3 Be, Live, Buy Different Campaign

The *Be, Live, Buy Different Campaign*, a new program from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Center for a New American Dream, is helping young people connect the dots between their concern about the environment and their willingness to help. By focusing on consumer power, it shows young people that they can make a huge difference by learning more about what they buy and making smarter purchasing decisions. For example, the campaign organisers declare that “if just one out of every ten middle and high school students [in the US] each bought just one recycled notebook this year, they would save over 60,000 trees, conserve 25.5 million gallons of water, and stop 5,250,000 pounds of global warming gases from being released”.

The interactive “[ibuydifferent.org](http://ibuydifferent.org)” web site provides opportunities for young people to learn more about the campaign and on how to get involved. Loaded with information and activities, the web site gives young people the scoop on how their buying affects the environment and provides opportunities to take action.

Some of the highlights of the web site include:

- **What's The Deal:** Offers background on how youth buying choices affect the environment.
- **Power Up:** Relates success stories from around the United States of what young people are doing in their community to consume smarter.
- **Take Action:** Shares with teens simple steps to empower them with what they can do to buy different and make a difference in their communities. Includes the Community Action Guide with 30 activity ideas and some step-by-step advice on organising projects to make a difference in your community.

<sup>10</sup> CACPK is a non-profit independent consumer organisation dedicated to the protection and promotion of consumer interests. CACPK is a member of Consumers International (CI). See Kim (2003) for further information.

- **Buy Different Action Center:** Provides young people with an opportunity to register and find out exactly how many resources can be saved when taking four simple actions.
- **Animated e-cards:** For teens to spread the message about smart consuming.

However, the web site is only one part of this US national sustainable consumption campaign. Many other activities are being carried out around the country. For instance, recent pilot projects have identified youth leaders in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Seattle. Community partners in these three locations are developing launch events and programs to galvanise their local youth to consume differently. Young people participating in the *Be, Live, Buy Different Campaign* set an example for others to follow. The campaign encourages young people to seek out school supplies that pollute less, conserve water, and use fewer, if any, trees. Kathryn Fuller, President of WWF, notes, “This project helps young people see that what they buy makes a real difference, and that they can take direct action in their lives to shape the world for the better”.

New Dream’s Executive Director Diane Wood adds, “We’re helping them to become smarter consumers. Whether it’s changing their back to school shopping patterns or taking action in the home, young people are seeing first hand that what they do matters”.

Simple steps that WWF and New Dream have identified include:

- Using one compact fluorescent light bulb (CFLs) in your home saves 1300 pounds of carbon dioxide (by-product of electricity) from being released into the air.
- Buying a post consumer recycled notebook to save trees, water, and energy.
- Skipping one quarter-pound hamburger a week saves 40,629 gallons of water in one year.
- Installing efficient shower heads will save 8,000 gallons of water and prevent over 450 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions every year from entering the atmosphere.

#### Implications for Australia

1. Young people in Australia can visit the web site to learn about general SC principles, however, many examples and programs listed are US specific.
2. Young people would benefit from a range of tips and local action ideas to achieve sustainable consumption in Australian communities.
3. Work to build understanding in young people that what they do matters.

### 5.3.4 Urban Tripper

A number of non-profit youth groups, councils and societies support young Australians in their pursuit of sustainable lifestyles. One such initiative is the Urban Tripper web site that is supported by Environment Victoria (<http://www.urbantripper.org.au/>).

The aim of this project is to help the car culture evolve to something more fun and sustainable. The project web site asks a young person to consider such questions as: Ever noticed how many songs try and sell you the notion that you don’t rate if you’re not driving a car? Ever wondered why there are so few bike paths? Ever questioned why you’re not allowed to ride your skateboard nearly as many places as you can drive a car?

In essence, the web site provides young people with an interactive set of choices they can follow when considering some of the alternative modes of travel available to them. Through cartoon-depicted storytelling young people are encouraged to choose sustainable modes of transport such as a bike rather than the traditional motor vehicle when visiting friends or going out to a party.

#### Implications for Australia

1. Not many young people are aware of such sustainable transport projects.
2. The Web is a good place to empower young Australians to take action on sustainable consumption.

## 5.4 Networks and programs

### 5.4.1 Sustainable Living Competition

The Sustainable Living Competition, part of the Sustainable Living Project, is an exciting national competition that rewards high school students for environmental projects undertaken in the classroom or individually. Because of the way in which this initiative helps empower change agents, it was highlighted as an example in the pilot leadership development process for young people (see Case Study 5.2.1).

The Sustainable Living Competition is an annual event run by the University of New South Wales’ Faculty of the Built Environment. The event encourages students to develop sustainable solutions to environmental problems. The Competition is considered an excellent teaching tool that gives a high school class and students focus, motivation and an exciting project theme to work around.

Every student involved in working on a project for the competition receives a certificate of participation

in “creating a sustainable future” whether or not the final project is formally submitted to the judging process. Free support and resources are available to assist teachers and students tackling environmental issues, and each year there are more than \$30,000 worth of prizes to be won.

The competition seeks to encourage original and inventive solutions to environmental problems and using the competition in a teaching program is a great tool to encourage Key Competencies such as:

- group work;
- individual achievement;
- problem solving;
- design innovation; and
- research and investigation and communication.

Entries can come from any subject area including Science, Design and Technology, Geography, Agriculture, Visual Arts, Media Studies, etc. As such the competition can also help teachers achieve a range of syllabus or curriculum objectives in most high school subjects. **Hence, the program can act as a driver and catalyst of curriculum change.**

Entries from previous years have included ecotourism resort designs, renewable energy projects, a biodegradable pot plant holder, research and investigation into water quality, a sustainable gym, recycled furniture and planning an environmental conference. Many of the winning entries from the 2003 competition responded to major sustainable consumption issues. For instance, one of the runners-up, Helen MacCarthy, tackled the problem of unsustainable consumption in her project.

Inspired by her experiences as a “Checkout Chick” in a local supermarket and by her passion for sustainability, Helen MacCarthy extensively researched and fully developed a labelling and environmental rating system for all of the products in the supermarket where she worked. With an exhaustive design process, investigating the psychology of mass marketing, Helen produced labelling that appealed to the average shopper in an attempt to push the issue of sustainable consumption into the mainstream conscience. The most outstanding element of her work was her attention to detail and her focus on critical reflection and evaluation. Her passion and understanding of the need for individuals to take responsibility for “sustainable living” has translated into a realistic and well developed solution.

For a full account of the 2003 winning projects and more on the Sustainable Living Competition see <http://www.sustainableliving.com.au/competition/>. These projects were used in the Youth Workshops run as part of the Capacity Building for Sustainable

Consumption Change Agents in Australia Program developed and run by the Project Team.

#### Implications for Australia

1. The Sustainable Living Competition encourages teacher support, enables curriculum adaptability (i.e. each school can include a focus on sustainability within their own frameworks), there is recognition and financial rewards for young people at the end of the program and many of the schools act as support organisations throughout the process.
2. Although the Sustainable Living Competition includes entries that support core sustainable consumption principles, there is no major competition in Australia that has sustainable consumption as its major focus.

#### 5.4.2 Eco-Innovate 03

The *Eco-Innovate 03: Young Innovators Making a Sustainable Future* conference held at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, from July 14–18, 2003, is another initiative of the Sustainable Living Project. The forum was hosted by UNSW, and supported by the UN Environment Programme and Bayer.

Eco-Innovate 03 was designed to showcase sustainable ideas and also as an opportunity for young people to learn about the ways that these ideas can be developed. Eco-Innovate 03 engaged motivated secondary and tertiary students from across the Asia-Pacific region in formulating design solutions – eco-innovations – to produce positive environmental outcomes. Over four days, participants exchanged ideas, examined regional best practice and worked with key opinion leaders, experts and business mentors to learn how their ideas could be developed. Participants acted as ambassadors, encouraging eco-innovation in their own communities when they returned home. By involving delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region, the forum embraced diverse worldviews in sharing expertise and developing best practice across national borders.

A key theme of the forum was sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption and sustainability were highlighted as key drivers for achieving technological and social innovation. A major workshop was dedicated to the well-known sustainable consumption tool “ecological footprint analysis”. Initial design aspects of the pilot leadership development for sustainable consumption project (see Case Study 5.2.1) were tested in this workshop run by a member of our project team. The Eco-Innovate forum exemplifies a successful model for empowering young people to be agents of change for

more sustainable consumption. After learning about various sustainable consumption issues at the forum, sharing experiences with their peers through online forums and hearing motivational speeches from respected personalities, some participants returned home to initiate a number of innovate sustainability projects including school recycling programs and community green shopping guides.

Further information on this forum can be found in the *Eco-Innovate 03 Change Agents Kit* (CD-ROM) or at <http://www.eco-innovate.net/index.html>

#### Implications for Australia

1. Only a small number of Australian youth are able to participate annually in this initiative. Effective post-forum (and ongoing) support of participants is a crucial area that is often neglected by many meetings that involve young Australians.
2. Sustainable consumption is a key subject area, but not the major focus of this forum. There was a major online focus for the conference where young people were encouraged to engage with each other in online forums.

### 5.4.3 Planet Ark

Planet Ark's aim is to show people and business the many ways that they can reduce their day-to-day impact on the environment. It's an Australian not-for-profit organisation that was set up by the tennis player Pat Cash and international charity campaigner Jon Dee back in June 1991. Here are a few examples of the work carried out by Planet Ark and its thousands of volunteers and supporters:

- Planet Ark is best known internationally for its "World Environment News" service that is sponsored by Reuters. Promoted by Pierce Brosnan and read by people in over 50 countries every day, it is now the world's biggest online environmental news service. Over eight million people a year visit the Planet Ark site.
- In July 2003, nearly 250,000 volunteers planted over 2.2 million native trees as part of Planet Ark's "National Tree Day". Planet Ark organises this event in partnership with Toyota and AMP Foundation and in association with Greening Australia. The event was fronted by Planet Ark supporter Olivia Newton-John, Jamie Durie and many other well-known celebrities, all of who donated their time to the event.
- Over 500 million greeting cards have been recycled for the "Cards 4 Planet Ark" greeting card recycling campaign. Every year, Australia Post give away a million 'Cards 4 Planet Ark'

recycling envelopes that people can fill with cards and post free at any post box.

- Each November Planet Ark runs "National Recycling Week". At this time Planet Ark releases Australia's annual recycling figures and the latest research on the public's recycling attitudes. Planet Ark also joins with hundreds of councils around Australia to promote recycling and waste reduction on a local basis.
- One of the most successful campaigns has been the "Plastic Bags Reduction" campaign. 6.9 billion plastic check-out bags are used by Australians every year. Thanks to a joint campaign with the *Sunday Telegraph* that has been lauded by David Suzuki, this has led to an agreement between governments and retailers to halve the use of plastic bags by the end of 2005.
- Planet Ark has also been working with whole towns to get them to totally ban plastic check-out bags. The first town to join Planet Ark's plastic bag free towns campaign was Coles Bay in Tasmania. The two most recent towns to go plastic bag free are Huskisson and Kangaroo Valley. Between them, these two towns are visited by over a million people a year, most of whom will experience plastic bag free shopping for the first time.
- In partnership with the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association, Planet Ark runs the "Phones 4 PlanetArk" campaign. This campaign has recycled hundreds of thousands of mobile phones and batteries, melting them down and turning them into new products.
- To make it easier for people to recycle, Planet Ark runs a web site at [www.RecyclingNearYou.com.au](http://www.RecyclingNearYou.com.au). This web site is sponsored by the Department of Environment and Conservation NSW. It allows Australians to type in their local postcode or council name in order to find out what can or cannot be recycled in their local area. The web site covers over 3,000 postcodes, making it the most definitive recycling site of its kind in Australia.
- The Do Something education video is available for free rental from over 450 Video Ezy stores nationwide. This shows people in a fun way how to save money and help the environment. The Do Something education kit is currently being used in thousands of primary schools Australia-wide. It is available for free downloading online from [www.planetark.com/dosomething](http://www.planetark.com/dosomething)
- The Planet Ark National Milk Carton Recycling Campaign is run in partnership with the milk carton industry. Since the campaign began, hundreds of millions of used milk cartons have

been recycled into office paper and other paper-based materials (Planet Ark, 2003).

See Appendix 1 for further information.

#### Implications for Australia

1. Most of Planet Ark's activities concentrate on recycling and vegetation rejuvenation. While valuable activities in themselves these are a necessary but insufficient approach to developing the critical thinking skills and action competence needed to actually reduce consumption and reshape consumer attitudes toward sustainability.
2. School-based education tools such as the Do Something education kit might be best incorporated into new holistic sustainable consumption teaching units/curricula.

#### 5.4.4 Waste recycling in schools

There are formal waste recycling programs in place in many educational institutions in Australia. Young people have founded some of the programs and many of them only continue to operate through the enthusiasm and inventiveness of young people. However, two successful institutional-sponsored examples of school waste recycling initiatives are the Waste Wise Schools program and the School Communities Recycling All Paper (SCRAP) program. It should also be noted that the Australian Government's Sustainable Schools Initiative also includes coverage of topics such as waste recycling.

The Waste Wise Schools program is an initiative of EcoRecycle Victoria that assists Victorian schools to minimise waste and reduce litter. This program is one of Australia's leading environmental education program and it is available to all Victorian schools. Over eight hundred schools across Victoria are now involved in this innovative and action-based program. By adopting Waste Wise Schools practices, some schools have reduced the amount of waste going to landfill by up to 95 per cent. As a result, these schools have saved thousands of dollars.

The Waste Wise Schools Program is relevant to primary schools, secondary schools and special school settings. It assists schools to minimise waste, reduce litter and save money through meaningful integrated learning opportunities. The Waste Wise Schools Program offers substantial support for schools to develop and run their own waste and litter programs, covering both curriculum and school operating practices. This support is available to all schools that make a commitment to waste and litter education.

School Communities Recycling All Paper (SCRAP) is a non-profit organisation that helps schools and their communities to become more environmentally friendly. SCRAP offers a unique system of waste reduction and environmental education to schools and other bodies.

Today, SCRAP's membership has reached around 1500 active, recycling educational bodies including schools, colleges, child care centres and universities and 1000 other non-profit and government bodies and businesses. SCRAP covers around one half of all schools in NSW and the ACT.

SCRAP does more than just recycle paper. It also helps schools and other organisations to understand more about helping the environment. Some of its other programs include:

- Green Waste Reduction;
- Solid Waste Auditing;
- Cartridge Recycling;
- Recycled Product Purchasing – Green Buys; and
- Sustainable Schools Program.

Both of these programs empower young people to act as change agents in the wider community through education and other specialised training and skills development activities. For instance, the zero waste strategy offered to schools through the SCRAP program includes an audit of school refuse that encourages students to take part in the separation process of a days worth of school waste. This eye-opening activity has encouraged many young people to become actively involved in sustainable consumption-related initiatives in their local communities. See Appendix 1 for more information on these two programs.

#### Implications for Australia

1. Existing SCRAP and Waste Wise Schools programs are mostly limited to recycling and waste minimisation activities. There is scope for expanding these programs to include further sustainable consumption messages.
2. There is little evidence of similar State-wide activities in schools outside NSW, Vic, and ACT.
3. Further partnerships could be established (e.g. such as ANU Green buying recycled paper from SCRAP for their offices).

## 5.5 Other tools

### 5.5.1 Social marketing for sustainable consumption

Social marketing is one approach that can be used to sell the messages of sustainability. Governments have often used social marketing techniques to sell messages of social concern such as those pertaining to smoking and drink-driving. Nowadays, governments, non-government organisations and even sometimes businesses market messages that have the effect of changing consumption patterns (e.g. the European Washright Campaign).

An Australian organisation that provides both consultancy as well as educational and training assistance on social marketing to a wide range of clients is Social Change Media (SCM). Through their seven steps to social marketing approach, Social Change Media aims to facilitate behaviour change by increasing the capabilities of individuals and communities to further their own aspirations. SCM is currently running a hands-on set of workshops on how to successfully apply social marketing techniques. The “Enabling Change” workshops provide participants with proven strategies and tools to design programs that really motivate change – all richly illustrated with numerous cases from Australia and overseas. Out of these workshops participants will:

- receive powerful insights into processes of social change;
- be able to make programs more persuasive;
- know how to set achievable objectives;
- understand how to work with values, norms and comfy zones;
- learn to avoid common pitfalls; and
- simplify the process of evaluation.

Adbusters, the Canadian non-profit organisation, uses social marketing techniques to raise awareness of the trappings of consumerism and to encourage people to foster positive change in their communities. Adbusters employs a number of culture jamming activities (e.g. anti-ads, posters, videos) as well as widely known campaigns such as TV Turnoff Week and the annual Buy Nothing Day, to encourage more sustainable consumption. Tools made available by Adbusters educate and empower young people to become change agents for more sustainable consumption in their communities.

Social marketing techniques, including examples from Social Change Media and Adbusters, were highlighted in the sustainable consumption capacity building process (see Case Study 5.2.1). See Appendix 1 for more information on these two programs.

#### Implications for Australia

1. Lessons learned from social marketing campaigns like Life Be In It and Do The Right Thing should be considered when exploring new sustainable consumption campaigns.
2. There are no mainstream social marketing programs in Australia that address sustainable consumption messages (i.e. such as anti-ad/culture jamming techniques employed by Adbusters).

### 5.5.2 Bigfoot – ecological footprint calculator

Ecological footprint analysis is one of the main tools highlighted in the pilot sustainable consumption capacity building process for young Australians (see Case Study 5.2.1).

Bigfoot is an interactive program in the EcoLogic exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum and playable on the EcoLogic site at <http://projects.powerhousemuseum.com/ecologic/games.htm>. It estimates the size of the users’ ecological footprint from answers to 15 questions. Bigfoot is the first ecological footprint calculator to use Australian data and terminology.<sup>11</sup>

Ecological Footprint Calculators measure our use of nature, by calculating how much land is required to produce all of the resources we consume, and absorb all of the waste we produce. William Rees and Mathis Wackernagel describe the concept in the book, *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing Human Impact on the Earth*. There are a wide number of organisations around the world that use ecological footprint calculators to teach young people about the damage caused by our present lifestyles. Ecological footprint analysis is a powerful tool for empowering young people to become change agents for more sustainable consumption, as it helps them to visualise their individual impact and to then teach others using the same methods. The US non-profit organisation “Education for a Sustainable Future” suggests some advantages for teaching with an ecological footprint calculator:

- Students can calculate their footprints and learn more about the impact of resource consumption on the Earth.
- Students can compare their footprint with the average of their country, and other countries. They can learn about the different ways that people live around the world, and how that translates into different land use impacts.
- Ecological Footprint analysis can be used as part of a curriculum aimed at calculating the

<sup>11</sup> There are many other eco-footprint calculator versions available (for example see Redefining Progress at <http://www.rprogress.org/programs/sustainabilityindicators/ef/>)

ecological footprint of a community – their home, school, or town. Students can collect the data through surveys, interviews, and library research. Students can also try out different changes and see the effect (e.g., recycling, changes in diet).

- Students can present the results of their footprint calculations to their community, and propose ways to lower the community's footprint.<sup>12</sup>

#### Implications for Australia

1. Eco-footprint calculators rely on capacity building of teachers/youth leaders to be used effectively (for example, see UNESCO Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future, Module 9, Activity 5).
2. A large number of young Australians are yet to be exposed to the power of ecological footprint analysis (as well as other sustainable consumption tools of this nature).

### 5.5.3 ANU Green Guide

Local sustainability guides or green shopping guides such as the annual Australian National University (ANU) *Green Guide* encourage young people to affect positive change in their communities.

The 2003 *Green Guide* is an 85-page booklet that provides information for ANU students as well as other residents of Canberra to learn how to live more responsibly. It includes resource-saving tips, details on where to shop for sustainable products, information on how to get involved in community action and a list of other related local and national organisations and initiatives that young people can join.

The *Green Guide* is put together by dedicated ANU students and supported by the ANU Student Association Environment Collective. The Environment Collective is a non-profit body enabling official representation of student views on a wide variety of environmental issues both on and off campus. The Collective runs a range of programs including campus paper recycling and re-use activities. More information on the ANU Environment Collective's functions can be found at: [http://clubs.anu.edu.au/clubs/Environment\\_Dept/](http://clubs.anu.edu.au/clubs/Environment_Dept/)

#### Implications for Australia

1. Although a number of institutions have recently produced local sustainability guides, there are still too few of them available to young people.
2. Many local sustainability guides do not address all of the key principles of sustainable consumption, addressing mainly issues such as recycling, reusing and green purchasing.

## 5.6 Synthesis of implications for Australia

As this selection of case studies clearly demonstrates, action to encourage sustainable consumption is progressing on a number of fronts. However, many of the positive initiatives to foster young sustainable consumption change agents that are in place in some countries are yet to be replicated in Australia. For instance, Australia is yet to provide meaningful acknowledgment of the global UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange initiative on sustainable consumption for young people. Additionally, Australia is yet to follow the lead of other countries such as Mexico, Korea and Germany that have implemented national YouthXchange web sites.

Undoubtedly, without an appreciation by government, business and the wider community of the critical importance of sustainable consumption, and hence the need to empower young change agents, progress toward adopting common sustainable consumption teaching curricula and significant social marketing campaigns on SC will continue to stall. In the meantime, relevant features from many of the successful sustainable consumption tools and empowerment strategies discussed above can be incorporated into training and capacity building processes that foster young sustainable consumption change agents. Indeed, the sustainable consumption training and capacity building project (see Case Study 5.2.1) demonstrates a model by which young Australians can be empowered to take action on sustainable consumption, and confirms the success of engaging young people in supportive workshop environments.

<sup>12</sup> See Education for a Sustainable Future at <http://csf.concord.org/esf/>

# 6 Policy implications

## 6.1 Introduction

Most OECD countries, including Australia, have instituted some form of conventional policy intervention to encourage sustainable consumption and production in the past 20 years (Section 6.2). However, while sustainable production programs have led to improvements in pollution prevention and minimum standards for the energy efficiency of domestic appliances have been instituted, the impact of sustainable consumption policies has been limited in most countries (Section 6.2.1).

By conducting “one-off” policy interventions that fail to recognise the complexity of interconnected systems, measures are often diluted or eroded somewhere else along the production-consumption cycle. There is, therefore, a growing appreciation of the need for integrated approaches that simultaneously address supply- and demand-side considerations (Section 6.2.2).

In addition, Jackson and Michaelis (2003) argue that conventional policies alone may not provide the vibrancy needed to foster a sustainable society in the near term. A new policy framework for sustainable consumption (Section 6.3.1) requires a government wary of the crucial role it plays in shaping individual consumer behaviour through institutional, social, cultural and ethical factors. Emphasising the importance of individual and societal wellbeing

(Section 6.3.2) and encouraging the support of industry (Section 6.3.3) are key components of this approach. A newly diversified role for government must promote collaboration and mutual learning with business and the public. Young people should be afforded more opportunities to become actively involved in the process of social change and given the capacity (empowered) to act as sustainable consumption change agents in Australia (Section 6.4).

## 6.2 Conventional sustainable consumption policies

The government role in sustainable consumption policy-making has been divided into two categories by Jackson and Michaelis (2003):

**Government seeks to understand and influence consumer behaviour from the outside:** The government as manager of the system attempts to stimulate changes in consumption behaviour through measures such as regulations and standards, market instruments and planning. First generation environment policies such as those that have been successful in achieving energy efficiency through minimum standards for domestic appliances are now playing a less significant role than second generation policies (market instruments). These market instruments include the removal of harmful

subsidies, shifting taxes from “goods” to “bads” (e.g. internalisation of environmental/social costs) and creating new markets in environmental “goods” and “bads” (e.g. greenhouse gas emission permits). Although implementing new environmental and social taxes and charges is always a challenge, recent research suggests that public opinion is largely concerned with appropriate policy design and good public communication. Urban planning measures are also sometimes used to shape consumption behaviour (e.g. public transport options).

**Government seeks to influence consumers through information, education and other psychological measures:** The government uses measures such as taxes, media regulation, labelling and education to try and persuade people to consume differently. Actions have been most prevalent in areas like health, safety and addiction (e.g. anti-smoking advertising). A government’s aim is to send a deterrent signal or strong moral message. Certainly, both successes and failures have been recorded. A well-known Australian government initiative is the *Energy Star* labelling scheme for household electrical appliances. Two recent consumer information sources are the booklet *Your Home* on passive home design, green building materials and furnishings and water and energy efficient appliances; and *Shop Smart: Buy Green* advising consumers on the likely environmental impact of commonly purchased products and services (see also Section 2.3.3). However, public awareness of campaigns is often low and awareness-raising alone is ineffectual in changing behaviour.

These two ways in which governments seek to influence consumption patterns form the basis of a set of international sustainable consumption guidelines.

### 6.2.1 Sustainable consumption guidelines

The United Nations has acknowledged the importance of adopting sustainable consumption policies by introducing a set of sustainable consumption guidelines. In 1999, the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection – a framework for governments to use in formulating and strengthening consumer protection policies – were expanded to include elements on sustainable consumption. The sustainable consumption principles (listed in full in Appendix 5) champion government policy implementation in a number of key areas. These include:

- environmentally sound products, services and new technologies;
- recycling activities;
- consumer protection regulations that include sustainable consumption;

- economic instruments such as taxes and subsidies;
- public information such as statistics and indicators that measure progress;
- impartial environmental testing of products;
- consumer behaviour research into sustainable consumption;
- awareness raising and information campaigns; and
- sustainable government activities such as green procurement (UNCTAD 2002).

In 2002, three years after the Guidelines’ inception, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and Consumers International (CI) conducted an audit of sustainable consumption policy implementation in 52 countries. According to the Survey, “Tracking Progress: Implementing Sustainable Consumption Policies”, 38 per cent of the governments that responded to the survey were not aware of the Guidelines’ existence. Australia was regarded to be amongst the leading countries, and has recently featured prominently in a more advanced analysis of the survey results – ranking inside the top ten with an index score of five out of a maximum possible score of ten (see Figure 16). A common criticism of the UN Guidelines in the past has been their failure to convey a clear message of what is expected of governments in terms of specific policy measures. Hence, a new training manual developed by UNEP and Consumers International on “how to implement the sustainable consumption guidelines” has been developed and will be published in late 2004.

As discussed in Chapter 2, examples of Australia’s conventional sustainable consumption policies have been highlighted in case studies published by the United Nations (UNEP 2002). Australia has been heralded for such programs as the “Green Games 2000 Initiative”, recycling programs on aluminium cans, mobile phones, batteries, newsprint and waste oil, the Environment Industries Action Agenda and a tax on Sydney car park spaces.

**Figure 16: Sustainable consumption policy index**

Rank	Country	SCPI score
1	Sweden	6.6
2	Germany	6.4
3	Netherlands	6.2
4	Norway	6.0
5	Finland	5.8
6	Belgium Canada	5.6
8	Denmark	5.4
9	Australia South Korea	5.0
11	Japan	4.8

Source: Bentley 2003

Australia still has some way to travel before fulfilling its responsibility to comply in full with the UN Guidelines. A few opportunities for improvement include recognising sustainable consumption in national consumer protection legislation, and advancing policies on green procurement, indicators to measure sustainable consumption and sustainable technologies (see OECD 1998).

### 6.2.2 An integrated approach

In the 20 years preceding the mid-1990's, the main brunt of policy action to protect the environment came in the form of legislation aimed at what has become known as the "supply-side" of the sustainable consumption equation (see Section 2.3.3 for examples of the Australian Government's sustainable production initiatives). In contrast, we have witnessed in the past decade a proliferation of actions at the "demand-side" (influencing consumer behaviour). Nowadays, governments have begun to appreciate the fact that policies to influence consumer demand alone will likely fall short of their full potential without complementary interventions that impact further up the product chain (supply-side). In other words, if consumers are expected to change behaviour for the good of the environment or the wellbeing of other people they will often require the appropriate "infrastructure" to be put in place in order to make realistic and long-lasting changes. Bas de Leeuw, Head of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Sustainable Consumption and Production Strategy Unit argues that:

Policies to promote sustainable consumption should address both demand and supply side

measures influencing both the "software" (how do consumers think and feel) and the "hardware" (what can consumers do) for consumer choice. These policies may also include economic instruments, consumer and product information based instruments as well as regulatory instruments and voluntary approaches.

(OECD 2002)

Both the OECD and UNEP now encourage governments to integrate programs and policy measures that independently tackle supply and demand side factors (see for example OECD 2002). The main message of a 2002 study by the OECD was the importance of developing integrated policies that use a combination of economic, regulatory and social instruments. According to the paper titled *Policies to Promote Sustainable Consumption* (OECD 2002), individual consumers can reduce their impact on the environment and the wellbeing of others in the following ways:

- purchase and use fewer resources (for instance energy and water saving);
- purchase and use more eco-efficient resources (for instance solar electricity);
- purchase and use fewer products (for instance one television set instead of three);
- purchase and use more eco-efficient products and services (for instance public transport); and
- produce less waste (avoid packaging and contribute to recycling schemes).

In order to provide an illustration of the integrated approach, the study widened the policy basket to include options to intervene at the production level. For instance, producers can choose to:

- supply the same products with less environmental damage incorporated (by means of process oriented measures such as good housekeeping, pollution control, waste management);
- supply improved and more eco-efficient products (eco-design, eco-labelling activities); or
- supply new (combinations of) products and services, satisfying underlying needs and eco-efficiency (demand-driven innovation). This includes two categories: (1) supplying services directly aimed at reducing the environmental impact (for instance recycling services, deposit/refund schemes); and (2) supplying new services that meet the need that the product fulfilled but using less material and generating more added value to the company (a strategy that is not necessarily only provoked by the environmental agenda).

There exists a circular reinforcement of actions between producers and consumers once actions have commenced (OECD 2002). Conversely, limited or no action on the part of one group may signal the need for no action on the part of another. For instance, consumer acceptance of sustainable products will be more likely if more producers have decided to supply these products; however, without the existence of undeniable consumer demand for these products in the first place business will not introduce such products onto the market. This “catch-22” as it were, remains a major challenge for proponents of sustainable consumption policies, and may be overcome through life-cycle-based, multi-stakeholder strategies and through new, innovative ways of eliciting the support of business, as discussed in the following section.

### 6.3 A new sustainable consumption policy paradigm

According to many academics (De Graaf et al. 2002; Michaelis and Jackson 2003; Gardner and Assadourian 2004) conventional policy intervention alone is unlikely to bring about the scale or pace of consumption change needed to move towards a sustainable society. In addition, many policies often underestimate the complexity of underlying motivations and limit the scope of government involvement in shaping sustainable consumption.

#### 6.3.1 Some basic principles for a sustainable consumption strategy

Writing in the British context for a major governmental review of sustainable development actions, Jackson and Michaelis (2003) put forward a blueprint for a strategic approach to sustainable consumption policy. The researchers identified six key policy lessons from their detailed analysis:

1. Current government policy misconstrues the relationship between material commodities and quality of life. A shift in government policy would be justified to place more emphasis on other contributors to quality of life, such as health, community engagement and meaningful work.
2. Current thinking suggests that it would be infeasible for government to change individual consumer behaviours. Research does not support this presumption. Government plays a vital role in shaping the cultural context within which individual choice is negotiated through its influence on technology, market design, institutional structures, the media, and the moral framing of social goods.

3. Current government policy assumes that the market offers consumers the freedom to choose the lifestyle that best reflects their needs and desires. Research does not support this presumption. Consumers often find themselves “locked in” to unsustainable consumption. Government intervention is vital to facilitate change.
4. A variety of movements and networks have developed in Britain, in which small groups learn about environmental and social issues, explore lifestyle options and take collective action. Their scope to demonstrate sustainable lifestyles would be greatly increased by government policies to establish a more supportive context.
5. The government role in our post-traditional society is shifting from control to a “change management” approach, encouraging learning. Successful leadership requires government to listen to others and question its own assumptions and practices.
6. To develop an effective strategy for sustainable consumption, the government will need to work on a collaborative basis with stakeholders to develop congruent visions, strategies, practical actions, and evaluation processes.

A vision for sustainable consumption policy emphasises the role for government in:

- aligning vision and rhetoric with policy and practice;
- shaping the cultural context of consumption;
- supporting non-governmental initiatives for change and innovation;
- establishing programs, agencies and networks to nurture successful initiatives and encourage their replication; and
- establishing an on-going process of review and collaborative learning (Jackson and Michaelis 2003).

According to Jackson and Michaelis, these suggestions differ from conventional approaches to sustainable consumption policy because firstly, they clarify the critical role government has to play in shaping the institutional, social, cultural and ethical context within which individual consumer behaviour is constructed, and secondly, they provide a framework from which government can edge away from the traditional “control” and “persuasion” approach to a collaborative approach that works with the public to jointly foster social change.

### 6.3.2 Emphasis on wellbeing

Another way of looking at this new paradigm is through amplified discussions on “wellbeing” (Gardner and Assadourian 2004) and “downshifting” (Hamilton 2003). In particular, the broad acknowledgment that there is no solid correlation between accumulated wealth and increased happiness is starting to reflect in the attitudes of many consumers in developed economies. New data supports the notion that many Australians are swapping greater financial gain for improved quality of life (see Chapter 2). But most consumers have yet to make the psychological leap: by no longer judging their own worth by the amount they earn and consume, even though many seem encouraged to do so. According to Hamilton (2003):

The *Yearning for Balance* report identifies a fundamental disconnection between what people see as important for their own, their family’s and their nation’s wellbeing and how they and their fellow citizens actually lead their lives. They want their lives to be grounded in the basic values of family closeness, friendship, and individual and social responsibility, but they see their society and their own lives mired in consumerism, selfishness and exploitation of the material world.

Indeed, many Australians feel trapped into their present consumption behaviour for a range of different reasons. In essence, it is often a lack of “wellbeing infrastructure” that prevents many consumers – including young consumers – from adopting more sustainable consumption behaviour. Proponents of the transition from a consumer society to a “wellbeing society” herald many necessary adjustments. For instance, Hamilton (2003) suggests changes that affect work (e.g. shorter working hours), marketing, progress measurement, education, environment, trade and poverty and exclusion. John de Graaf et al. (2002) highlight a broad spectrum of actions that include media literacy, corporate responsibility, labour rights in developing countries, internalisation of environmental and social costs and curbing credit card spending. However, because of society’s current exuberance for economic growth many of these sustainable consumption policies and programs are likely to be met with resistance from industry and government. That is why enlisting the support of business in particular is so important.

### 6.3.3 Industry on board

For many years, eco- and green-design practices have been praised for their success in developing products and services better for the environment. A 2002 UNEP study *Consumption Opportunities* clearly

demonstrates the benefits available to business and encourages stakeholders to see sustainable consumption “as a means of partnership and opportunity leading to increased quality of life for all” (Manoochehri 2001). Although concerns that protecting the natural world will damage business profitability remain evident in many business sectors, in recent years, some companies have invested heavily in developing and utilising new sustainable product approaches such as life-cycle analysis (LCA) and integrated product policies (IPP). In addition, many companies have learned that financial savings are abundant when implementing cleaner production (CP) activities and resource efficiency standards by either a factor of four or a factor of ten. According to Hamilton (2003):

Ecodesign principles should be required in everything, from office buildings and business equipment to transport and cars. Ecodesign aims to eliminate pollution by ensuring that firms make ecologically [and socially] suitable choices in terms of materials, manufacturing methods and construction processes; it also aims to reduce resource use to a minimum through the adoption of “closed loop” cycles. Firms would be required to take responsibility for the materials they use and the wastes they generate, from cradle to grave.

Many businesses have found that they can advance market share by adopting such principles. In addition, new markets in sustainable products and services are sure to appear as consumer demand for these products become more apparent. For instance, there seems to be a growing interest in sustainable products by young Australians (see Chapter 3). Government has a role to play in encouraging industry to broaden the depth and scope of sustainable products and services.

While resource efficiency is important and more sustainable products necessary, innovation (technology) need not be the only driver of sustainability. Taking another view, as the principles of sustainable consumption widen in the public realm, sustainability itself may become the major propeller of growth in new forms of innovation in social and technological arenas.

## 6.4 Conclusion and issues for youth policy

A wide range of policies – conventional and innovative – must be utilised in an integrated manner to bring about sustainable consumption. Supply- and demand-side actions to help encourage young people to consume more sustainably, and to act as

change agents to lead society toward sustainability, are necessary. Government must encourage a collaborative and mutual learning process with industry and the public, and encourage business to meet the demand for more sustainable products and services. The development of multi-stakeholder programs on sustainable consumption will help facilitate learning on sustainable consumption principles.

Young people acting on their own will find the going difficult if they are not supported, for example, with appropriate changes to public infrastructure. In addition, building young people's competency or capacity to take action on sustainable consumption is as equally as important. A primary goal is to empower young people to learn how to identify elements of unsustainable consumption that concern them and how to address them (see Chapter 5). Achieving this goal will involve designing programs that address the following objectives:

- to develop an understanding of a range of concepts;
- to encourage reflection on the effects of personal values and lifestyle choice; and
- to promote skills for personal reflection, decision making and civic action (Fien and Skoien 2000).

Sustainable consumption provides an ideal entry point for youth development activities in general because of its status as an "umbrella topic" for sustainability. Young people interested in poverty, environment, politics, human rights, animal rights, designing new technologies, etc. can all secure goal realisation through sustainable consumption

strategies. While a major national youth policy on sustainable consumption is yet to materialise, many federal and State and Territory policies and programs such as the Australian Government's Sustainable Schools Initiative aid the development of sustainable consumption learning opportunities for young people. The South Australian Youth Action Plan that is currently in development is likely to include objectives such as "improving wellbeing" and "attaining sustainability". These two issues are prime objectives for achieving sustainable consumption.

In addition, a sustainable consumption framework may assist young people to develop an improved sense of purpose in their lives by empowering them to "make a positive difference" in their communities. Finally, it is important to reiterate the fact that consumption is a powerful vehicle through which present and future solutions to the problems of unsustainability may be reached (Fien 2000). These are a few of the principal motivations underlying UNESCO's decision to select *sustainable consumption* as one of its key action themes for its decade of education for sustainable development (2005–2014). According to UNESCO:

There is a need to reduce the impacts of lifestyle consumption habits on society and resources to ensure equitable availability of resources for all around the world. **Education and training for sustainable production and consumption play an important role in achieving this by creating a more critical and responsible attitude towards consumerism in our everyday lives** (UNESCO, Decade on Education for Sustainable Development).

# 7 Recommendations

Based on research undertaken for this study, the project team has identified: some major issues for continued conventional sustainable consumption policy development (Section 7.1); five components of a proposed national program on sustainable consumption for young people (Section 7.2); ideal methods for report dissemination (Section 7.3); and some ideas for future research (Section 7.4). A wide range of general sustainable consumption policy instruments are listed in Appendix 6, and the UN sustainable consumption guidelines on which Section 7.1 is based are included in Appendix 5.

## 7.1 General policy context

There is no magic solution to unsustainable consumption in Australia. A mix of conventional and innovative sustainable consumption policies need to be implemented in an integrated manner to encourage the proliferation of more sustainable lifestyles. Conventional policies such as those that encourage the development and use of environmentally and socially sound products and services, and that promote recycling and reuse by consumers, are a few of the ways governments promote sustainable consumption (see Box 2). However, conventional policies alone will not be enough to achieve sustainable consumption under current circumstances. The defining elements of a new sustainable consumption policy paradigm is a realisation by government of the critical role it plays

in shaping individual consumer behaviour through institutional, social, cultural and ethical factors, and the responsibility it has to empower people to affect changes in their own lifestyles. Government should operate within a collaborative framework with industry and the public (including young people), and build trust by carrying out independent reviews of progress.

To this end, two recommendations for general policy development into which policies and programs for youth sustainable consumption can be located are made:

### **Recommendation 1:**

That the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments and local governments clarify current policies in light of the United Nations guidelines on sustainable consumption, and consider new innovative approaches that reflect an emphasis on sustainability and wellbeing, business and industry, and public support and cooperation.

### **Recommendation 2:**

That the Australian Government facilitate partnerships with other governments, business and non-governmental organisations (including universities, schools, etc.) to encourage policy review mechanisms and indicators which monitor progress towards sustainable consumption targets and make this information publicly available as part of a public awareness and education strategy.

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## 7.2 A national youth and sustainable consumption program

### United Nations sustainable consumption guidelines

The United Nations guidelines on sustainable consumption highlight general themes for sustainable consumption policy development. Many of the following elements from the UN Guidelines have been tailored to position youth as the main target group. The complete UN Guidelines are included in Appendix 5.

- *Encourage a proliferation in the number and variety of sustainable (and fair trade) products and services available to young people (e.g. electric/fuel-cell-powered cars). This can be achieved through the development and use of new environmentally sound products and services and new technologies (innovation), including information and communication technologies, that can meet consumer needs while reducing pollution and depletion of natural resources (full life cycle impacts).*
- *Make changes to infrastructure that will deliver opportunities for young people to consume and live more sustainably (e.g. better public transport, sustainable workplaces).*
- *Develop and implement strategies that promote sustainable consumption through a mix of policies that could include regulations and economic and social instruments (e.g. new taxes and removal of subsidies that promote unsustainable patterns of consumption and production).*
- *Widen education and information programs that raise young people's awareness of the impact of consumption patterns, and educate and inform of ways to live more sustainably (e.g. environmental and ethical labelling schemes).*
- *Advance recycling programs that encourage young people to both recycle wastes and purchase recycled products.*
- *Incorporate sustainable consumption considerations into existing regulatory mechanisms for the protection of consumers (e.g. Trade Practices Act).*
- *Introduce sustainable practices in government and other organisations, in particular through procurement policies (e.g. green/sustainable procurement).*
- *Promote further research on young people's consumption behaviour in order to identify*

*ways to make consumption patterns more sustainable (see Further Research).*

- *Encourage frequent testing by impartial bodies of ethical, environmental and social standards of a broad range of products and services.*
- *Develop indicators, methodologies and databases for measuring progress towards sustainable consumption at all levels. Implement a compliance monitoring mechanism – overseen by an impartial organisation – to measure government and business progress in adopting the sustainable consumption principles outlined in the UN Guidelines.*

This study argues for the need to develop a national sustainable consumption program for young people. A nationwide program should build on the successful components of this project including the Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia initiative. The five sets of workshops that have been run for this NYARS project clearly demonstrate the advantages of empowering young people to carry forward their enthusiasm for sustainable consumption to the wider community. While many of the available tools and strategies for training on sustainable consumption are incorporated into the framework of the capacity building initiative and listed in this report, young people would benefit from an interactive and up-to-date online and published catalogue of national and international sustainable consumption resources. The evaluation of the Program has led to recommendations for improvement that should be incorporated if appropriate resources are available, and before further deliveries of the initiative.

The responsibility for changing consumption patterns rests with a wide range of change agents in Australia. Hence, partnerships between government, business and non-governmental organisations will be essential for fostering sustainable consumption among young Australians. A nationwide program for developing sustainable consumption change agents should bring together Australian Government, State and Territory Government and local government representatives as well as informed young people, key youth service providers, other non-governmental organisations and industry partners. The main elements of an ideal three-year program would be:

- Appointment and resourcing of a secretariat/committee – that includes young people – to manage the national program.
- An Australian version of the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange training guide and web site on sustainable consumption.

- A Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents program in each State and Territory modelled on the small-scale initiative outlined in this report.
- A small grants program for young people who develop sustainable consumption projects in their communities through program participation and an annual national awards program for sustainable consumption projects initiated by program participants.
- Links with other national programs on sustainable consumption (e.g. South Korea and Germany) and with international initiatives such as YouthXchange and the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

### **Appointing a secretariat/committee of young people**

A small secretariat and committee of young people should be appointed to oversee the implementation and provide support for the ongoing functions of the national program. The secretariat would be responsible for the maintenance of the web site/training guide; the selection process, preparation (train-the-trainer sessions) and oversight of community host organisations for program rollout; and the delivery of annual progress reports. The national program could also fund research on sustainable consumption and consider using social marketing techniques in national campaigns to educate young people on sustainable consumption. For instance, a partnership initiative between governments, business and civil society could endeavour to support the several existing sustainable consumption-related labelling initiatives (e.g. WELS, Environmental Labelling Association, Fair Trade Association of Australia and NZ) and promote these labels to consumers.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental representatives, appoint and resource a secretariat and committee of young people to administer the national sustainable consumption program.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

That a partnership platform be established between governments, business and civil society to promote consumer awareness of existing product labels that support sustainable consumption, such as resource saving, environmental protection, animal rights, fair trade, labour rights. This partnership platform could undertake a national social marketing campaign to increase awareness and consumption of goods under these labels, and promote the entry of new labels as appropriate.

### **Ensuring the availability of the appropriate resources and support**

Young people consulted for this study have identified their need for more resources on sustainable consumption. There are several tools and strategies available that encourage sustainable lifestyles such as ecological footprint analysis and sustainable purchasing guides. However, the information is often fragmented and rarely takes a holistic view of pursuing sustainable consumption. Information and education for sustainable consumption modules, guides, networks and web sites could be modelled on international initiatives such as the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange training kit on sustainable consumption, and programs underway in countries like South Korea and the USA. An Australian sustainable consumption resource kit/guide/web site could be modelled on the global UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange training kit on responsible consumption and incorporate features from other successful sustainable consumption initiatives such as the UNSW–UNEP–Bayer Eco-Innovate 03 electronic forums, the German Consumer Association youth web site and the WWF–CNAD “Ibuidifferent.org” initiative. Learning from the Australian Government’s Sustainable Schools Initiative should also be incorporated. A national information and education resource kit could provide advice on living more sustainably, guidance on training and personal skill development and information on tools and strategies that can be used to promote sustainable consumption in the wider community. All educational institutions in Australia should be encouraged to teach units on sustainable consumption that include topics such as the impacts of consumerism (i.e. environmental damage), the influence of advertising and marketing on young people’s lifestyles, and tools and strategies available to help foster sustainable lifestyles. For example, programs such as the Sustainable Schools Initiative should incorporate teaching on the full range of sustainable consumption issues. There are a host of examples of teaching curricula in other countries that cover a range of sustainable consumption topics in a fun and interactive manner (e.g. Changing Consumption Patterns by the US-based Sustainability Education Center). The sustainable consumption workbook designed for use by young people consulted for this project includes many of the important elements to be covered in a sustainable consumption information and education strategy.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations,

lead the development of a national “YouthXchange”-style sustainable consumption resource kit/web site for young Australians.

**Recommendation 6:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, encourage education for sustainable development actors to include modules on sustainable consumption for young people, and facilitate the development of new education for sustainable consumption tools and resources for high school curricula.

**Enhancing young people’s capacities to become sustainable consumption change agents**

This report argues that the key to developing young agents of change for sustainable consumption is through developing action competence. The action competence approach for sustainable consumption emphasises the need for learning and skill development. Although sustainable consumption training programs should include modules that discuss the impacts of consumerism and sustainable consumption solutions, the most important features include encouraging youth participation, leadership development, community and organisational support, networking opportunities and follow-up activities. There are several sustainable consumption tools and strategies available that, when used in combination, spawn a powerful method for empowering young agents of change for sustainable consumption. It is recommended that the Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia program (see Case Study 5.2.1) be expanded in order to encourage sustainable consumption training and capacity building opportunities for young Australians. A possible starting point could be to further support the host organisations assembled for the pilot program (in Adelaide, Brisbane, Bendigo and the Mornington Peninsula) and past workshop participants. This could include helping these organisations run further workshops with young people in their communities and support young people with their ongoing SC projects. However, there is a need to move beyond these largely metropolitan/urban (except Bendigo) centres and empower young people in rural and remote parts of Australia and also target more marginalised young people in all regions.

**Recommendation 7:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations, encourage sustainable consumption training and capacity building opportunities for all young Australians.

**Developing small grants and national awards programs**

A number of schemes and programs could be established to provide financial incentives and other forms of recognition for young people who work toward sustainable consumption. For instance, we recommend a small grants scheme – similar to initiatives facilitated by the Foundation for Young Australians – that support young people and organisations working with young people (local governments, community groups, etc.) to conduct sustainable consumption-related projects. A yearly national awards program could be developed from this small grants program that would not only recognise achievements and promote sustainable consumption, but also provide a framework for evaluation of programs and their impacts. An SC awards program could be linked to other existing initiatives such as the Young Australian of the Year awards.

**Recommendation 8:**

That the Australian Government, State and Territory Governments and local governments, in partnership with business and non-governmental organisations, develop a small grants program for young people who develop sustainable consumption projects in their communities and an annual national awards program for sustainable consumption projects.

**Establishing links with national and global programs**

There are many opportunities to link existing programs that foster sustainable consumption at home and abroad with a national sustainable consumption program. For instance, relations should be explored with Australian programs such as the Sustainable Living Project and the Waste Wise Schools program as well as international activities such as the UNEP–UNESCO YouthXchange initiative. In addition, sustainable consumption is considered one of the key action themes of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014), and therefore links should be explored between the UN Decade and a national youth and sustainable consumption program. Links should also be explored between this proposed program and existing DEH activities such as the Sustainable Schools Initiative.

**Recommendation 9:**

That the Australian Government support the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, and promote links between the Decade and a national youth and sustainable consumption program in Australia.

### 7.3 Report dissemination

As a complementary measure to the standard dissemination procedure for this NYARS initiative, the project team would recommend that the report findings be presented in special seminars in each State and Territory in Australia. A brief discussion of the results could be made to principal personnel from relevant State agencies and from community and youth organisations. State government youth affairs offices in each State and Territory could be asked to host the presentations. Other participants could include State/Territory environmental protection agencies (e.g. NSW EPA) and various community organisations working with youth in their local communities. Many youth and community organisations that have already identified an interest in sustainable consumption issues could be invited (including the wide range of organisations that participated in the capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents program). Subject to funding, this round of “results” seminars could be designed to coincide with train-the-trainer workshops in each location (e.g. interest in the capacity building program has been shown by NT and WA organisations). The researchers acknowledge that this dissemination process is beyond the normal scope of NYARS dissemination procedures, and therefore the researchers accept responsibility for seeking out appropriate funding and for working with NYARS to help facilitate standard report dissemination.

The report findings can be further disseminated nationally, subject to approval by the NYARS committee, by the following methods:

- ABC Radio National: The Bush Telegraph program has invited the researchers onto the program to discuss the findings of the youth SC survey.
- Forward the report/press release to interested parties in Australia and overseas. The project team has developed a large database of young people and community and government organisations that have asked to be kept informed of the initiative’s progress. Many of the young people that participated in the SC survey have requested to see the results as soon as possible.
- Submit articles/papers to selected publications and conferences.
- Provide a case study summarising the Sustainable Consumption and Young Australians project to the new global online UNESCO–UNEP YouthXchange sustainable consumption case study database.
- Draft an article for UNEP’s monthly Sustainable Consumption newsletter (SC.net) that is disseminated to almost 1500 people worldwide.

### 7.4 Further research

This study has identified the following key themes to address in future research projects:

- **A comprehensive strategic review on sustainable consumption.** Although this report has made several suggestions based on the literature and consultations with young people, the development of a new strategic policy approach to sustainable consumption is beyond the scope of this document. Therefore, government should consider undertaking a major review on sustainable consumption as an immediate priority.<sup>13</sup>
- **Development of alternative measurements of wellbeing/sustainable consumption.** It is widely accepted that the standard tool used to record societal health, GDP, is an inadequate measure of wellbeing. There have been a number of attempts in the past few years to devise alternatives that better measure quality of life, such as the Ecological Footprint, the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), the Human Development Index (HDI), the Living Planet Index (LPI) and the Wellbeing Index (WI). Other indices also exist that calculate government responses to sustainable consumption (e.g. SCPI) and quantify corporate social responsibility (e.g. Reputex). A review of the available indices (and potential consolidation into one national indicator of societal wellbeing) is required.
- **Further quantitative/qualitative research on youth and sustainable consumption.** The researchers consulted with as broad a range of young people as was possible for this particular study. The views of young people from remote, less socially aware and low socio-economic backgrounds have been included in the study. And although the results of this study reiterate findings from other studies, further exploration of different attitudes, triggers and issues between different groups of youth for example age, sex, locality and socio-economic background seems necessary. It is highly likely that there are great divergences in the level of concern and motivational triggers about sustainability among youth as a broad group. These divergences need to be explored, to ensure that each section of the group is targeted meaningfully for any resulting actions. Other issues that could be addressed include exploring the disconnection between social concern and personal action and the level of happiness derived from different levels of consumption.
- **Young Australians as downshifters?** Future research could explore the concept of

<sup>13</sup> Jackson and Michaelis (2003) recommended the UK Government impose a similar national review on sustainable consumption.

“downshifting” as it relates to young people (12–25). Can young people downshift? Are there signs that they are already doing so (are the numbers consistent with findings for older age groups – see Hamilton 2003)? What forms of alternative lifestyles are young people adopting as opposed to consumption-centred lifestyles (e.g. eco-spirituality)? What is encouraging the proliferation of alternative lifestyles (e.g. lack of life purpose/meaning/happiness)? Why do “tribes” of sustainability-conscious young people not get discussed at length in the literature, and are largely ignored by marketers?

- **Economic modelling to determine impact on Australia’s economy from major investments in sustainable consumption.** An independent research institution could study the possible

impacts on Australia’s economy over a range of periods (e.g. 10, 20, 50 years) if certain sustainable consumption measures were supported by business and government today.

**Recommendation 10:**

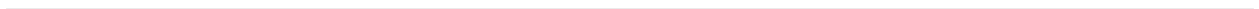
That the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments, in partnership with business and community organisations, undertake a comprehensive strategic review on sustainable consumption policy and patterns in Australia.

**Recommendation 11:**

That research further explores the link between young people’s consumption and such phenomena as downshifting, eco-spirituality, quality of life, ambivalence/unhappiness, action competence and sustainable lifestyles.

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# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Sustainable consumption resources

The following table includes a compilation of the available tools and strategies for empowering young

people to affect changes in the consumption patterns of their families, their communities as well as their own. Also, individuals and organisations that inspire young people (parents, schools, etc.), and young people themselves can use these resources.<sup>14</sup>

Individuals			
Tool and/or strategy	Brief description	Contact details	Discussed in workshops <sup>15</sup>
<b>Ecological footprint calculators</b>	Calculate your ecological footprint. How large is your footprint?  Hard copy available for classrooms, workshops <a href="http://csf.concord.org/esf/index.php">http://csf.concord.org/esf/index.php</a> – this version used in SC workshops (also included on the TLSF CD-ROM)	Other ecological footprint calculators/resources:  <a href="http://projects.powerhousemuseum.com/ecologic/games.htm">http://projects.powerhousemuseum.com/ecologic/games.htm</a> (uses Australian data)  <a href="http://www.rprogress.org/programs/sustainabilityindicators/ef/">http://www.rprogress.org/programs/sustainabilityindicators/ef/</a>  <a href="http://www.ecofoot.net/">http://www.ecofoot.net/</a>	
<b>ibuydifferent.org</b>	Useful tips for how individuals, families, and communities can take action on SC. Operated by WWF and CNAD	<a href="http://www.ibuydifferent.org">http://www.ibuydifferent.org</a>	* includes action ideas that were discussed in the action planning exercises
<b>Sustainable living competition</b>	Rewards high school students for environmental projects undertaken in the classroom or individually	<a href="http://www.sustainableliving.com.au">http://www.sustainableliving.com.au</a>	
<b>Youth LEAD</b>	Fosters in young people the skills, motivation and opportunities to lead the way to a sustainable future	<a href="http://www.ozgreen.org.au/">http://www.ozgreen.org.au/</a>	
<b>Future leaders</b>	Designed to provide young people with inspiration and skill development	<a href="http://www.futureleaders.com.au/">http://www.futureleaders.com.au/</a>	
<b>Join a Planet Ark campaign</b>	Includes recycling and product campaigns	<a href="http://www.planetark.com">http://www.planetark.com</a>	
<b>Join or create a SC network, e.g.:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>UNEP Asia Pacific Tunza network</i></li> <li>• <i>Eco-Innovate forums</i> – young sustainability innovators yearly conference, includes sust. consumption</li> </ul>	<a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tunza-asiapac">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tunza-asiapac</a>  <a href="http://www.eco-innovate.net/">http://www.eco-innovate.net/</a>	
<b>Read about more tips and SC issues:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Culture Jam (2000)</i>, K. Lasn</li> <li>• <i>Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic (2002)</i>, J. De Graaf</li> <li>• <i>Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things (1997)</i>, J Ryan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fast Food Nation (2001)</i>, E. Schlosser</li> <li>• <i>State of the World 2004</i> – Special focus: The Consumer Society, Worldwatch Institute</li> <li>• Adbusters magazine</li> </ul>	

<sup>14</sup> Many of the tips, tools and resources listed here can be applied across various sectors (individual, family, etc.).

<sup>15</sup> The following tools were used and discussed in the workshops for young people.

Family			
Tool and/or strategy	Brief description	Contact details	Discussed in workshops
<b>Conscious consumer web site</b>	Helping you find products better for the environment – US focus	<a href="http://www.newdream.org/consumer/">http://www.newdream.org/consumer/</a>	
<b>Green purchasing</b>	Resource by RMIT – includes green purchasing guidelines, green purchasing networks and the “how to” guide buying green	<a href="http://www.greening.rmit.edu.au/university/procedures/guidelines.html">http://www.greening.rmit.edu.au/university/procedures/guidelines.html</a>	
<b>More fun, less stuff: starter kit –</b>	Suggests tips for being a responsible consumer, tips on consumer purchases, work, food, transport, etc. Includes Turn the Tide: Nine Actions for the Planet, <i>community action guide</i> and various other activities (by CNAD, US)	<a href="http://www.newdream.org/thedream/starterkit.html">http://www.newdream.org/thedream/starterkit.html</a>	* Includes action ideas from the community action guide by CNAD
<b>Centre for a New American Dream (CNAD)</b>	See instructional videos, comics, keeping a consumption log, responsible consumption campaigns and many other resources	<a href="http://www.newdream.org/">http://www.newdream.org/</a>	
<b>Downshifting</b>	Try working and consuming less, and spending more time with your family, friends and on leisure, outdoor activities  Read about how many Australians and their family's are downshifting to escape the “rat race”	<a href="http://www.tai.org.au/">http://www.tai.org.au/</a>  From The Australia Institute, e.g.: • <i>Downshifting in Australia – A seachange in the pursuit of happiness</i> (2003) • <i>Can't Buy Me Love?: Young Australians' views on parental work, time, guilt and their own consumption</i> (2004)	
<b>Visy recycling</b>	Recycling solutions for your school, work, home, etc. They recycle paper and cardboard, glass, steel, plastics, liquidpaperboard and aluminium	<a href="http://www.visyrecycling.com.au">http://www.visyrecycling.com.au</a>	
Think about <b>buying organic, local</b> or <b>fair trade</b> products!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fair Trade Association Australia and New Zealand</i></li> <li>• <i>Oxfam Community Aid Abroad Shops</i></li> <li>• <i>Tradewinds</i></li> <li>• <i>Aust. Environmental Labelling Association</i></li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.fta.org.au/">http://www.fta.org.au/</a>  <a href="http://www.oxfamtrading.org.au">www.oxfamtrading.org.au</a>  <a href="http://www.tradewinds.org.au">www.tradewinds.org.au</a>  <a href="http://www.aela.org.au/keylinks.htm">http://www.aela.org.au/keylinks.htm</a> (includes organic product labels)	

<b>Institutions</b>			
<b>Tool and/or strategy</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>Contact details</b>	<b>Discussed in workshops</b>
<b>Changing consumption patterns</b>	An integrated curriculum for high schools (grades 9–12) – US focus	<a href="http://www.sustainabilityed.org/">http://www.sustainabilityed.org/</a>	*Discussed in the train-the-trainer sessions
<b>YouthXchange: towards sustainable lifestyles</b>	UNEP–UNESCO training kit on responsible consumption – global focus	<a href="http://www.youthxchange.net/">http://www.youthxchange.net/</a>	
<b>Living sustainably</b>	Issues, classroom activities and teaching resources for primary and secondary: Tips for actions at home, school and community – Global Learning Centre, Qld.	<a href="http://www.uq.net.au/~zzglcent/glc_living_sustainably.html">http://www.uq.net.au/~zzglcent/glc_living_sustainably.html</a>	
<b>Teaching and learning for a sustainable future</b>	UNESCO–Griffith University multimedia teacher education program, CD-ROM, includes sustainable consumption module	<a href="http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/">http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/</a>	*Discussed in the train-the-trainer sessions
<b>Stuff: The secret lives of everyday things</b>	Teaching curriculum, includes lesson plans, quizzes, etc. – US focus	<a href="http://www.northwestwatch.org/publications/stuff.asp">http://www.northwestwatch.org/publications/stuff.asp</a>	
<b>Living in a material world: Lessons on commercialism, consumption and environment</b>	Classroom media activities: high schools – US focus	Email: <a href="mailto:newdream@newdream.org">newdream@newdream.org</a>	
<b>Affluenza and escape from affluenza</b>	Videos, teaching guides, books, quizzes, tips on living simply, etc., on costs of materialism and over-consumption	<a href="http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/">http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/</a>	
<b>Sustainable schools initiative</b>	This DEH initiative integrates sustainability education into a holistic program	<a href="http://www.deh.gov.au/education/nap/veen/projects.html">http://www.deh.gov.au/education/nap/veen/projects.html</a>	
<b>Waste wise schools program</b>	Is an initiative of EcoRecycle Victoria that assists Victorian schools to minimise waste and reduce litter	<a href="http://www.gould.edu.au/wastewise/">http://www.gould.edu.au/wastewise/</a>	
<b>SCRAP</b>	School Communities Recycling All Paper	<a href="http://www.scrapltd.com.au/">http://www.scrapltd.com.au/</a>	
<b>Environmental education – e.g. Australia</b>	Environmental education teaching resources  <a href="http://www.ericse.org/elessons.html">www.ericse.org/elessons.html</a>	Environment Australia school activities  <a href="http://www.ea.gov.au/education/activities/index.html">www.ea.gov.au/education/activities/index.html</a>	

Community			
Tool and/or strategy	Brief description	Contact details	Discussed in workshops
<b>Adbusters</b>	Sustainable consumption messages through the media (magazine, video, campaigns)	<a href="http://www.adbusters.org/home/">http://www.adbusters.org/home/</a>	
<b>ANU Green Guide 2003</b>	Example of a local sustainability guide	<a href="http://clubs.anu.edu.au:clubs/Environment_Dept/">http://clubs.anu.edu.au:clubs/Environment_Dept /</a>	
<b>Buy Nothing Day + TV Turnoff Week</b>	Why not organise your own Buy Nothing Day event in 2004?	<a href="http://adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd/">http://adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd/</a>	*Highlighted in connection to media strategies
<b>Social change media</b>	Sydney-based company focuses on facilitating behaviour change. Resources include: Tips for using the media, Making reader friendly text	<a href="http://media.socialchange.net.au/">http://media.socialchange.net.au/</a> SCM also run enabling change on sustainable consumption training workshops, Email: <a href="mailto:emmak@socialchange.net.au">emmak@socialchange.net.au</a>	*Presented in workbook and referred to in media exercise
<b>Generating the news</b>	A young person's guide to getting media attention	<a href="http://www.det.qld.gov.au/about_us/publications_resources/resources.htm">http://www.det.qld.gov.au/about_us/publications_resources/resources.htm</a>	*Sample copies available
<b>Ecologic – Creating a sustainable future</b>	Resources by the Powerhouse Museum for home, community, schools. Include teaching guides, ecological footprint, sustainability indicators and design for the environment	<a href="http://projects.powerhousemuseum.com/ecologic/games.htm">http://projects.powerhousemuseum.com/ecologic/games.htm</a>	
<b>ANU Green</b>	Example of how to reduce environmental impact at an institution	<a href="http://www.anu.edu.au/facilities/anugreen">http://www.anu.edu.au/facilities/anugreen</a>	
<b>Pachamama: Our Earth, Our Future</b>	UNEP–UNESCO–UNICEF guide on taking environmental action, 2002 Teachers Guide – primary school focus	<a href="http://www.grida.no/geo2000/pacha/">http://www.grida.no/geo2000/pacha/</a>	
<b>Telling the emperor</b>	A guide to youth participation in decision-making for young people	<a href="http://www.youthaffairs.wa.gov.au/">http://www.youthaffairs.wa.gov.au/</a>	*Sample copies available
<b>“Youth on Board”</b>	14 points to Involving Young People in Decision-making	<a href="http://www.philanthropy.org.au">http://www.philanthropy.org.au</a>	
<b>Speak up for SC!</b>	There are dozens of networks, web sites, etc. around Australia where you can highlight your concern for SC issues	Some examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/">http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.asen.org.au/">http://www.asen.org.au/</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ea.gov.au">http://www.ea.gov.au</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Eco-innovate Change Agent kit CD-ROM</b>	Includes a wide selection of information on other tools, groups and info sites on the environment	<a href="http://www.eco-innovate.net/">http://www.eco-innovate.net/</a>	

## Appendix 2: Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia Program

### 1.0 An introduction to the Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia Program

In considering the objectives of the NYARS research project into sustainable consumption and young people as agents of change, the Griffith University and International Young Professionals Foundation (IYPF) project team developed and conducted a Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia Program.

The program was designed to achieve four objectives:

1. to elicit the views of young people on sustainable consumption and what it would take to support them to be agents of change in their community for more sustainable consumption;
2. to provide information on sustainable consumption possibilities, tools for analysing consumption impacts and critical thinking skills for exploring and evaluating alternative consumption choices;
3. to enhance skills in personal decision-making and youth leadership; and

4. to utilise the results of the literature review, the results of the survey and case studies of tools and programs that were researched to develop and test an “ideal” or “model” program for achieving the underlying goal of the research project – young people being equipped as agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities.

A pilot for the program was conducted as part of Eco-Innovate 03 in Sydney in July 2003. Based on the evaluation of this pilot, observations of Eco-Innovate 03, analysis of the literature, and the experience of the project team, a program featuring train-the-trainer and youth workshops was implemented in Bendigo, the Mornington Peninsula, Brisbane and Adelaide throughout March and April 2004. A sixth/additional workshop planned for Canberra was cancelled due to the time and resource constraints of the project. Similarly, we were unable to respond to requests to convene workshops in Newcastle, the Northern Territory, Logan (south of Brisbane), Nambucca Heads, and Sydney.

The capacity building program was developed, implemented and evaluated as outlined in Table A2:1.

**Table A2:1: Overview of development, implementation and evaluation phases of the capacity building program**

Phases and Activities	Timing
<i>Development</i>	
1. Initial design based on IYPF experiences	As part of tender process, April 2003
2. Pilot aspects of the capacity building process at Eco-Innovate 03	July 2003
3. Reflect on Eco-Innovate and NYARS project literature review	September to December 2003
4. Design youth and train-the-trainer workshops + supporting materials such as workbook, worksheets	November and December 2003; January 2004
<i>Implementation</i>	
5. Invite organisations in target communities to become host organisations for the delivery of the capacity building program	February 2004
6. Work with the host organisation to promote the workshops and recruit target young people and train-the-trainer participants	February and March 2004
7. Run the train-the-trainer and youth workshops in each location and collect youth workshop evaluations	March and April 2004
<i>Follow-up and evaluation</i>	
8. Support the host organisation to support young people's action plans and follow-up engagement	April, May and June 2004 (and ongoing)
9. Send final evaluations to young people and host organisations	May and June 2004 (depending on when workshop was run)

## 2.0 Development of the capacity building program

This sub-section of the report addresses the development of the capacity building for sustainable consumption change agents program. It outlines the background to the capacity building program design (section 2.1), a pilot workshop and results of a

follow-up evaluation within a youth and sustainability conference (including participant observation of that experience and network) (section 2.2), and reflections on the pilot workshop and conference learning and the process of the NYARS project literature review leading to the final design and resources for train-the-trainer and youth workshops (section 2.3).

<i>Development</i>	
Initial design based on IYPF experiences	As part of tender process, April 2003
Pilot workshop towards capacity building program at Eco-Innovate 03	July 2003
Reflect on Eco-Innovate and literature review	September to December 2003
Design youth and train-the-trainer workshops + supporting materials such as workbook, worksheets	November and December 2003; January 2004

## 2.1 Background to capacity building program design

The International Young Professionals Foundation (IYPF) as part of the tender process proposed an initial design for a capacity building program within the NYARS study. Prior to the call for tenders, the IYPF had been part of discussions with UNEP and UNESCO about acting as the Australian lead agency for the implementation of the sustainable consumption education and training kit – YouthXchange – developed by these two UN bodies. The NYARS tender provided an opportunity for the IYPF to move forward on these plans, draw on its network of young sustainability change agents, and implement a program for equipping young Australians to be leaders and agents of change in their communities for more sustainable consumption.

The initial design proposed for the capacity building program – as included in the NYARS tender document – had the following key features:

- Five workshops with young people around Australia that provide and evaluate tools and strategies that young Australians can use to move their communities towards more sustainable consumption.
- The creation of an online forum and the convening of face-to-face meetings locally to follow-up the youth workshops.
- A follow-up workshop in each of the five locations held one month after the initial workshop to evaluate and learn from the attempts to implement action plans in order to understand what works well, what works not so well, and what skills and support is needed to more effectively equip young people as leaders and change agents for sustainable consumption.
- Engaging a host organisation in each of the five

locations that would provide trainers and host and organise the two workshops with young people => the sourcing of host organisations would draw on the IYPF's networks in Australia.

- Training members of the five host organisations to deliver the workshops with young people through teleconferences and online discussions.
- Choosing a mix of host organisations and locations to ensure urban and regional participation, coverage of all ages from 15 to 24, and a diversity in the current activities of participants (i.e. working, at school, unemployed, university).
- An evaluation process, coordinated by the IYPF, at all stages of implementation.

In creating this design, the IYPF drew on the successful model it applied to run three workshops on youth entrepreneurship in 2003 as part of its *Blueprint* project. *Blueprint* utilised partnerships with local host organisations, as well as a facilitator guide, teleconferences and online chats to equip facilitators to run the workshops. The emphasis in the *Blueprint* workshops, and in the design of the capacity building program for this NYARS project on sustainable consumption, was to utilise limited resources to reach out to, engage, inspire, educate and train local young Australians, working in conjunction with local organisations and facilitators who could provide local follow-up and support, and perhaps spawn the creation of a local support network. The design also recognised the IYPF's strengths in virtual networking to support local action, its networks and membership in Australia – many with a sustainability change agent focus.

Contract conditions between Griffith University, the IYPF and NYARS meant that some aspects of this initial design had to be changed. The most significant issue was that Cameron Neil, as the IYPF

representative, was required to run all the workshops and not “sub-contract” to facilitators within local host organisations. Increased costs associated with delivering in person also meant that there was no funding for follow-up workshops in each location. The implications of these matters for the pilot capacity building program are discussed in section 2.4 with respect to the final design.

## 2.2 A pilot workshop and the experience of Eco-Innovate

An opportunity arose in the early stages of the NYARS project for Cameron Neil, the IYPF member of this NYARS project team, to participate in a youth and sustainability conference called Eco-Innovate 03. Eco-Innovate 03 brought together 120 young people aged 15–23 from around Australia (approximately 80 of the participants) and from seven other countries in the Asia-Pacific. For more information, see <http://www.eco-innovate.net>. At Eco-Innovate, Cameron ran a workshop on the ecological footprint as part of Eco-Innovate’s day-two theme of sustainable consumption, as well as acting as a mentor to delegates. Eco-Innovate agreed to facilitate follow-up evaluation of the ecological footprint workshop by distributing an email survey a few months after Eco-Innovate finished.

The ninety-minute ecological footprint workshop introduced Eco-Innovate participants to ecological footprint analysis as an important tool for understanding that the way people live their daily lives has a different level of impact on the planet. Participants measured their footprint and came up with three things they could do right now and from here on – personal changes – that would reduce their footprint. They then discussed their ideas for personal changes in groups of 12, and also identified what would need to be done to reduce the ecological footprint of their town, and what would help and hinder making both changes in their own lives and changes in their community.

Following the workshop and Eco-Innovate itself, Eco-Innovate opened its online forums to Eco-Innovate participants and mentors. The email sent by the Eco-Innovate organisers to all conference participants to open the online forums (and supply passwords) emphasised the importance of taking action now that the event has passed, encouraged people to share their successes and failures, and to use the forums to ask questions, seek assistance, and help each other. Eco-Innovate participants began sharing their projects, their successes, their frustrations, their questions, their answers, and much more. Eco-Innovate mentors and participants

alike responded to people’s calls for information or ideas to solve particular “road blocks” to successful projects and actions.

At the beginning of December 2003, the Eco-Innovate organisers distributed the agreed follow-up survey on the ecological footprint workshop to all Eco-Innovate 03 participants. Nineteen responses were received. While some questions asked specifically about the ecological footprint workshop, many of the responses to broader questions are likely to have been based on more aspects of the Eco-Innovate experience than the ecological footprint workshop alone.

Relevant learning from the survey includes:

⇒ Eighteen of 19 respondents rated the ecological footprint workshop as a useful learning experience.

I didn’t realise how much my ecological footprint was impinging on our world. It [the workshop] increased my awareness of what I could do to make a difference. I can help myself and others make more informed decisions and choices. (Emma, 15, Noosa, Qld).

⇒ Nine of 19 respondents found the workshop very useful in showing them ways to achieve greater sustainable consumption, yet only three respondents thought that the workshop had actually been very useful to them in promoting sustainable consumption when they returned home. Many participants felt that they lacked some of the tools, skills and the support to take action after the workshop. Comments criticised a failure to include action-planning techniques or in-depth discussion of actions young people can take to change consumption patterns.

The workshop showed you ways to achieve greater sustainable consumption, but didn’t really show us how to actually put our plans into action. (Felicity, 15, Brisbane).

I think the workshop was really useful in outlining the key areas of impact on ecological footprint. However, actually applying it to everyday life can be much harder than first thought. (Bany, 18, West Hoxton, NSW).

⇒ While the workshop improved the confidence and enhanced the skills of many young people, a few indicated they needed more confidence building and skills to take action once they returned home.

I’ve had minor impact at home but none in the wider community. I have not been proactive enough in dealing with others because I lack the confidence to try any such initiatives. Ways to teach others could be discussed in greater detail so that we as participants may also teach others. (Bany, 18, West Hoxton, NSW).

⇒ After returning home from the pilot workshop, many of the young people found it difficult to overcome some of the barriers to achieving sustainable consumption (e.g. apathy of others, money, time, confidence). Overall, respondents were hardly impressed with their ability to take actions individually or in the wider community. Twelve of 19 said they had not been very successful in acting to reduce the ecological footprint of the local community.

⇒ About half of the respondents to the survey said that they used the Eco-Innovate online forums to discuss and share information since Eco-Innovate. Young people said that discussion forums and networks were important tools for them to be kept informed of other people's achievements and for them to be encouraged to take action.

⇒ Respondents suggested that support networks would enhance action as they would provide a platform for when they got home to discuss challenges, share stories and encourage each other to continue the enthusiasm to take action.

Create a larger support network, get together with people from the forum in our local areas and actually write up and implement action. (Hannah, 17, Rosanna, Vic).

I really did try to make my way of living more sustainable but I found I could only do so through little things like eating less meat when I could, and taking stairs etc. It was difficult making larger changes, many of my friends and family just don't care. I tried to encourage recycling at work etc. but that was met with a negative response. I think regular email about tips and success stories would be encouraging. (Samantha, 18, Sydney).

⇒ Respondents thought that having a local focal point and regional/State support groups would assist in promoting follow-up action.

I think there should be a mentor (or more than one) per State or area, who you could contact if you had any problems with your projects or needed some support. It's probably not feasible, but you could train people, either delegates or mentors, to carry out the workshops in their community and give them endorsement of EcoInnovate (etc.) so we could go to our school, or uni, or other schools, and ask to run a workshop. I found this workshop to be really useful, but I think it would be even better, if the questions were directly related to our region (more detailed or specific). (No name, 16, Adelaide).

⇒ Young people suggested improving the workshop by making it more interactive (e.g. hands-on activities) and providing a wider range of tools and resources.

I thought it was fantastic and if it had to be improved maybe more interactive activities. (Sophie, 17, Sydney).

## 2.3 Final design of workshops and resources

The opportunity to participate in Eco-Innovate 03 and the online forums after the event, run the ecological footprint workshop and conduct a small follow-up evaluation was invaluable in finalising the design and planning of the capacity building program. It was also useful to reflect on the information gathered from the literature review, particularly the discussion of general and specific tools and strategies for young people to become agents of change for more sustainable consumption. A final design for the Capacity Building for Sustainable Consumption Change Agents in Australia program was agreed in early 2004, drawing on the initial design by IYPF for the project tender, the realities of the project budget and contracting constraints, the experience and learning from Eco-Innovate 03 (including the ecological footprint workshop and the follow-up survey), and the literature review. Key elements are train-the-trainer workshops, youth workshops, a sustainable consumption workbook and follow-up evaluation.

### Final design of the capacity building program:

- (a) invite organisations to nominate to be hosts, committing to organising local venues, catering and workshop materials;
- (b) work with the host organisation to promote the both train-the-trainer and youth workshops;
- (c) NYARS project team to run four sets of train-the-trainer and youth workshops;
- (d) support the host organisation to support young people's action plans and follow-up engagement; and
- (e) send final evaluations to young people and host organisations.

### Train-the-trainer workshop

Immediately prior to the workshop with young people – either the day or morning before – the NYARS project team runs a train-the-trainer workshop. The train-the-trainer workshop is offered to members of the host organisation, and people from other organisations or groups in the local community, who want to learn how to run the youth workshop or support young people in taking

action after the youth workshop. Some of those who complete the train-the-trainer workshop will assist the facilitation of the workshop with young people. The train-the-trainer workshop introduces the NYARS project, the purpose of the pilot capacity building project, and runs through what will happen in the youth workshop. It introduces participants to the sustainable consumption workbook and the range of resources that will be presented in the youth workshop. For the final part of the workshop, participants discuss what roles people will take on in the youth workshop, options and possibilities to be presented in the youth workshop for follow-up, resourcing and support of young people after the workshop, and the project evaluation process.

Through the train-the-trainer workshop, the final capacity building program design incorporates ongoing support of participants by the host organisations. The fact that host organisations are based in participant's local communities provides a local focal point that many young people believe is critical. In addition, the train-the-trainer workshop makes available to host organisations a number of sustainable consumption resources (e.g. videos, brochures, publications) that they can use in further education and training with young people in their communities. Opportunities for ongoing learning, support and peer interaction were raised as essential for young people to be effective agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities in the Eco-Innovate pilot. The online forms – through the evaluations and the observation of their use – became important tools for a small group of Eco-Innovate 03 participants to discuss and share information, stay informed of other people's achievements, raise questions, find out about resources and opportunities relating to sustainability, and for people to be inspired to take action of their own. Not everyone utilised the online forums though, and comments in the survey indicated a desire for face-to-face opportunities, a local focal point, and for regional or State level support groups. In the experience of the IYPF, online interaction tools are often default networking and support tools for conferences and events, more because they are cheap, easy and information can be disseminated instantly than their outstanding effectiveness. For online networks to work and remain active beyond the immediate hype of an event, they require good planning, resourcing and facilitators. Offline opportunities for members of the network to meet and re-energise may be helpful. Consideration of those young people that do not have regular access to the Internet is also necessary. The ability to put in to place such activities will be dependent on resources.

### Youth workshop

The workshop with 20–25 young people presents and evaluates a range of tools and strategies to assist young people in taking leadership to move their communities towards more sustainable consumption. The workshop highlights sustainable consumption issues globally and locally and focuses on individual and group strategies for addressing unsustainable consumption. The workshop develops individual and group action plans for participants to implement in their communities. The workshop caters for young people with little to no knowledge or previous experience with sustainability and sustainable consumption through to those with more experience in the sector.

A small selection of the most potent and up-to-date tools are discussed and evaluated in the workshops with young people. Tools and strategies relevant to making change at each of the following levels were chosen: Individuals, Families, Institutions and Communities. It was difficult to limit the number of selected tools and strategies to only a small number from the vast quantity available. However, taking into account the time available, the main tools and strategies included were:

- An Ecological Footprint survey
- A discussion of the YouthXchange project
- Action Planning
- Discussion of the Sustainable Consumption Resources table
- A small group exercise on barriers and solutions to effecting personal and social change to reduce the ecological footprint
- Presentation on Local Sustainability Guides
- An Adbusters inspired media exercise
- Discussion of the Sustainable Living Competition

The feedback from the Eco-Innovate 03 participants also influenced the inclusion of particular tools over others, for example action planning tools. The project team also felt it necessary to provide young people with a wide selection of tools from self-training guides, to social marketing techniques and community action tips. It was clear after a review of the pilot workshop evaluations that participants wanted to learn about a broader range of the available tools and strategies to help them foster sustainable consumption in their communities and to hear examples of what other young people have done and are doing. More interactive and “doing” activities were also included, as suggested in the Eco-Innovate 03 follow-up survey responses:

So in general, while I think the [pilot] workshop was an amazing intellectual process, it lacked the hands-on projects that a bunch of revved teenagers need to keep the brain in motion. So maybe cut some lectures, add more activities that get the brain DOING things, rather than speculating on what could be done, and you will have the best workshop that Australia has ever seen. (Tom, 18, Sydney).

A worksheet was also developed for distribution to youth workshop participants at the beginning of the workshop. The worksheet consists of two sections, one to be completed at the start of the workshop and one to be completed at the end. The “before the workshop” section gathers background information on the young person, including demographic data, their interest in issues related to sustainable consumption, their level of participation in community groups and projects, their reasons for coming to the workshop and what they would like to get out of the workshop. The “after the workshop” section asks people to evaluate the workshop, answer questions about some of the exercises completed during the workshop, their intended actions from the workshop, and other general feedback. It also asks people to nominate their preferred method of receiving the follow-up evaluation survey. All participants hand in the worksheet before they leave.

### **Sustainable consumption workbook**

A common theme evident after a review of the pilot workshop evaluations was that young people were keen to take home with them more information and a list of available sustainable consumption resources. Hence, a detailed workbook was developed for distribution to all workshop participants and trainers from the host organisations. The workbook is to be used by workshop participants during the workshop – where they record relevant and useful information gathered in the workshop and their own plans and thinking – and becomes a useful source of information and inspiration after the workshop. The workbook includes information on the project, examples of the various tools and strategies covered in the workshop and a detailed resource list (which includes further tools unearthed during the workshop content literature review). The trainers from the host organisations received a copy of the workbook and also a further reference page that includes information on some sustainable consumption resources such as videos and teaching guides.

The ecological footprint survey was included in the workshop because of its success in the pilot workshop. However, a few comments from the pilot workshop did lead us to include details of where to find more advanced ecological footprint surveys for those interested in taking the analysis to the next level and to also shorten the time spent discussing this tool:

I think that completing the ecological footprint analysis is a very important and effective way to make people aware of their impact on the environment. However, I think the workshop should have provided a more detailed and comprehensive ecological footprint analysis. I believe that the delegates were capable of taking on some of the more in-depth concepts. (Andrew, 19, Sydney).

### **Follow-up evaluation**

A follow-up survey is sent to workshop participants – in either hard copy or electronically – four to six weeks after the initial workshop to evaluate and learn from each young person’s attempts to implement action plans. The evaluation responses provide data that informs an understanding of what works well, what works not so well, and what supports and skills are needed to more effectively equip young people as leaders and change agents for sustainable consumption. The host organisation is also surveyed to determine what they did after the workshop to support young people and how successful or otherwise such strategies were. The evaluations help gauge the success of the workshops as a capacity building process for sustainable consumption and to receive feedback on other aspects of the workshops including which of the other strategies worked well/not so well when attempted in the local community or at home.

## **3.0 Implementation of the capacity building program**

This sub-section of the report outlines the implementation of the four capacity building programs in Bendigo (Vic), Mornington Peninsula (Vic), Brisbane (Qld) and Adelaide (SA). It firstly talks about how the host organisations were solicited (section 3.1), and then provides the details on dates, locations and host organisations for the capacity building processes (section 3.2). The section concludes with information on the delivery of the workshops and details on participants (section 3.3).

<i>Implementation</i>	
Invite organisations in target communities to become host organisations for the delivery of the capacity building program	February 2004
Work with the host organisation to promote the workshops and recruit target young people and train-the-trainer participants	February and March 2004
Run the train-the-trainer and youth workshops in each location and collect youth workshop evaluations	March and April 2004

### 3.1 Inviting organisations to get involved

In late February 2004, the NYARS project team distributed a call for host organisations throughout youth and youth related email networks, introducing the project and specified that Brisbane, Canberra, Bendigo, Adelaide and Mackay were the target communities (but interested organisations not in those areas were also welcome to contact the project team). The roles and responsibilities of a host

organisation were outlined. The provision of training to staff through the train-the-trainer was emphasised, as was the availability of a small amount of funds to pay for the catering and venue costs. The text of the email identified schools, community organisations, youth development initiatives, young professionals' organisations, and university groups as potential hosts. Distribution networks are listed in Table A2:2.

**Table A2:2: Distribution networks for call for host organisations**

Network/Point of distribution	
Youth Lead yahoo group <a href="mailto:youth_lead@yahoogroups.com">youth_lead@yahoogroups.com</a>	An extensive network of individual contacts of the project team, mostly those concerned with youth, environment and sustainability
TIG Australia <a href="http://australia.takingitglobal.org">http://australia.takingitglobal.org</a>	Australia's representative on the UNEP Youth Advisory Council – TUNZA – Alan Wu
IYPF–Oceania <a href="mailto:IYPF-Oceania@yahoogroups.com">IYPF-Oceania@yahoogroups.com</a>	Eco-Innovate 03 organisers, participants, mentors and follow-up survey participants
Youthgas <a href="mailto:youthgas@yahoogroups.com.au">youthgas@yahoogroups.com.au</a>	Youth Affairs Network of Queensland <a href="mailto:admin@yanq.org.au">admin@yanq.org.au</a>
Youth.Comm <a href="mailto:Youth.Comm@mail-list.com">Youth.Comm@mail-list.com</a>	ANU Environment Collective <a href="mailto:enviro.collective@student.anu.edu.au">enviro.collective@student.anu.edu.au</a>
Youth Field Express <a href="http://www.acys.utas.edu.au">http://www.acys.utas.edu.au</a>	IYPF Brisbane and Brisbane Youthlink Gathering

Interested organisations sent a short email to the project team with details on their organisation, their location, the characteristics of the young people they would involve in the workshop, and potential dates for the workshops.

### 3.2 Dates, locations and host organisations

The final host organisations for the capacity building program were selected based on a range of factors

including: capacity to organise the event, ability to support young people after the event, reaching a diversity of young people across the four hosting sites, opportunities for adding the capacity building process to the ongoing mission and activities of the organisation, willingness to work collaboratively, and budget and logistical considerations. The dates, locations and final host organisations are detailed in Table A2:3.

**Table A2:3: Final host organisations for the capacity building program**

Location	Train-the-trainer	Youth workshop	Host organisation(s)	Region	Locus
<b>BENDIGO</b>	18/03/04 1:30pm–4:30pm Lead On Office	19/03/04 9:30am– 3:30pm Lead On Office	<b>Loddon Murray Community Leadership Program and Victorian Young Farmers</b>	Regional	Community
<b>MORNINGTON PENINSULA</b>	22/03/04 11:00am– 2:00pm LLEN Office, Mt Eliza	23/03/04 9:30am–3:30pm Frankston Library Community Room	<b>Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN)</b>	Regional	School
<b>BRISBANE</b>	27/03/04 9:30am– 12:30pm Visible Ink, Fortitude Valley	27/03/04 1:30pm– 7:30pm Visible Ink, Fortitude Valley	<b>Young Scientists of Australia and Australian Science Communicators</b>	Urban	University
<b>ADELAIDE</b>	27/04/04 2:00pm– 4:30pm Office for Youth, Adelaide	28/04/04 10:00am to 4:00pm Disability Resource Access Centre, Adelaide	<b>Office for Youth, South Australia</b>	Urban	Community

### 3.3 Workshop delivery and participant details

#### Promotion

The NYARS project team worked with each host organisation to develop appropriate promotional materials to attract participants for the train-the-trainer and youth workshops. In Bendigo, Brisbane and Adelaide, the host organisations developed a flier that was distributed electronically and by post through their networks. The Mornington Peninsula LLEN did not develop a flier, but distributed an invitation email to their extensive networks. In addition, an email detailing all workshops and the host organisations was distributed by the project team to many of the same networks listed in Table A2:2.

#### Bendigo

For the Bendigo workshops, Cameron (NYARS project team) was joined by Beth Covitt, a Fulbright fellow visiting at Griffith University with an extensive background in youth and environmental participation. Cameron and Beth were joined in the train-the-trainer workshop by three participants, one from Victorian Young Farmers, and two from the Loddon Murray Community Leadership Program. All three participated in the youth workshop the following day. As shown in Table A2:4, the youth workshop participants were quite diverse in age and their current activities.

#### Mornington Peninsula

The train-the-trainer workshop was attended by 11 workers from various youth-related organisations and projects in the region. Organisations represented included youth centres, youth outreach services,

school-based youth workers, vocational education and training centres, and a person responsible for local schools' participation in the Mornington Peninsula Biosphere project. The youth workshop was attended by eight young people and three of those who participated in the train-the-trainer workshop. Over half of those who had RSVP'd did not attend. All but one of the workshop participants were school students, as shown in Table A2:4, and all lived at home with family members.

#### Brisbane

The train-the-trainer workshop was attended by three members of the Young Scientists of Australia Brisbane chapter, including the president and vice-president. Beth Covitt joined Cameron to facilitate the youth workshop, so the three trainers from Young Scientists of Australia had minimal facilitation duties and joined their colleagues as participants in the youth workshop. Eleven young people attended the workshop. Only one of the participants was a school student, one was working, and the remainder were university students (see Table A2:4).

#### Adelaide

Over 20 people RSVP'd for the train-the-trainer workshop, and 16 attended, representing government (Dept of Environment and Heritage; City of Unley; Office for Youth), welfare services (The Smith Family; Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; YMCA), and educational institutions (universities and TAFE). Four of those who participated in the train-the-trainer workshop attended the youth workshop (two as participants and two as co-facilitators). Six young people attended in total as per Table A2:4.

**Table A2:4: Details on youth workshop participants**

Location and total	Age and gender	Living arrangements	Current activity	Interest in issues	Prior community activity
Bendigo 18 people	Range is 14–27 yrs Average is 19.5yrs Males – 4 Females – 14	In family home – 9 Left family – 8	School students – 5 Tertiary students – 4 Working – 8	A diverse group, moderate on many issues, youth employment of high interest to a few, the environment more of high interest than not, materialism typically moderate to low interest	Events like Walk Against Want, Clean Up Australia Day, tree planting and Shave 4 a Cure were common; youth and school councils also common
Mornington 8 people	Range is 15–20 yrs Average is 16.5 yrs Males – 4 Females – 4	In family home – 8	School students – 7 Working – 1 (some were school students involved with school retention programs, i.e. to stop school leaving)	Moderate interest on most issues presented, high interest in youth employment	Little to no prior activity, except for one-off events like Clean Up Australia Day; some tree planting
Brisbane 11 people	Range is 16–21yrs Average is 19 yrs Males – 6 Females – 5	In family home – 8 Left family – 3	School students – 1 Tertiary students – 9 Working – 1	Generally high interest in most issues presented, particularly the environment and Third World poverty	Quite an active group, lots of association with green groups, tree planting, school outreach, and events like Walk Against Want
Adelaide 6 people	Range is 15–26 yrs Average is 20 yrs Males – 3 Females – 3	In family home – 4 Left family – 2	School students – 2 Working – 2 Tertiary students – 1 Unemployed – 1	Low to moderate interest in politics, high to very high interest in most other issues; lower interest on most issues for the school students vs. the others	Active group who has participated in things like 40hr famine, Young Achievement Australia, and local environmental initiatives

\* Note: One of the Bendigo participants did not hand in a worksheet

#### 4.0 Learning from the capacity building program implementation

This section reports on the learning from the implementation of the capacity building program. The learning draws on the following sources of data: (1) the experience and observations of the facilitator in running the workshops in each location; (2) worksheets completed by participants at the conclusion of each youth workshop; (3) the information produced by participants during each youth workshop; (4) post-workshop evaluations completed by youth workshop participants; and (5) post-workshop evaluations completed by train-the-trainer workshop participants and host organisations.

Learning about why young people participated

in the workshops and what they wanted out of them is discussed first (section 4.1). Data on the workshop process and content is reviewed next (4.2). Learning about some of the barriers and enablers for youth being agents of change for more sustainable consumption in their communities, and the learning about the role of media in sustainable consumption and what messages young people believe will be effective in promoting sustainable consumption to young Australians is presented in section 3.4.2 of the main report, as is learning about actions towards more sustainable consumption. The main report, in section 3.5, outlines reflections on young people as agents of change and sustainable consumption from the experience of the train-the-trainer workshops. Section 4.3 below discusses general comments made by participants.

<b>Implementation</b>	
Run the train-the-trainer and youth workshops in each location and collect youth workshop evaluations	March and April 2004
<b>Follow-up and evaluation</b>	
Support the host organisation to support young people's action plans and follow-up engagement	February and March 2004
Send final evaluations to young people and host organisations	April, May and June 2004 (and ongoing)
	May and June 2004 (depending on when workshop was run)

#### 4.1 Learning about why young people participated in the workshops

Participants in the youth workshop cited a range

of reasons as to **why they volunteered to attend**. This question was answered prior to the commencement of the workshop. Reasons are outlined in table A2:5.

**Table A2:5: Reasons for attending youth workshop**

To learn about sustainable consumption and sustainability	To find out how to take action towards more sustainable consumption
To learn about what is being done about sustainable consumption	To learn what I can do to make a difference
To be motivated	To help educate others and the community
To learn how I can change my lifestyle to be more sustainable	To learn about resources and tools I can use in my own current or future work
To learn from others	To view things differently
To meet others, especially those interested in these issues	To gain some skills and ideas for how to assist other young people to make change happen
To gain more skills, especially leadership skills	To better understand problems in the world
To find out how to make change happen	To have fun
To learn	

Here are some quotes from young people to illustrate the sorts of answers provided:

- To hear about the issues relating to sustainable consumption and what is being done about it. (Female, 19, Brisbane).
- I wanted to find out what I can do to help and get involved. (Male, 16, Mornington).
- I came to this workshop today because I would like to find ways in which I can change my lifestyle and recommend to others to create a better and more sustainable society for future generations. (Male, 16, Brisbane).
- Because I've spent the last few years educating myself about eco issues but am still unsure as to the best ways to take action. I want to get connected to other like-minded people. (Male, 21, Brisbane).
- I am concerned about the state of the natural environment, and wanted to be a part of a group who could make a difference. (Female, 19, Bendigo).
- To keep learning after Year 12 and for fun. (Female, 18, Bendigo).
- To learn about practical and simple ways in which I can make a difference to my consumption habits. (Female, 20, Adelaide).

- To broaden my knowledge and to be able to pass this on to my team. (Male, 26, Adelaide).

Prior to the commencement of the youth workshop, and also after the introduction to the workshop, participants were given time to **list three things they wanted to get out of the workshop**. Again, there were a range of answers, with a lot of commonality.

Here are some direct quotes from the completed worksheets:

1. a little more insight of the problem society is creating and facing; 2. find out what is in my power to do and idea of how I can help; 3. to take out more than I brought in and share my views. (Male, 16, Mornington).
1. leadership skills; 2. do more things differently. (Female, 15, Mornington).
1. greater understanding of youth perceptions about the world; 2. how I can make a difference; 3. more about sustainability. (Female, 23, Bendigo).
1. better understanding, 2. info on this subject, 3. knowledge to go out and tell others. (Male, 14, Bendigo).

1. strategy's around sustainable consumption; 2. furthering leadership in and around community; 3. getting a basic idea about consumption. (Male, 18, Bendigo).
1. to see what's happening around Australia, 2. get ideas about Australia's future, 3. get information on the environment. (Male, 15, Adelaide).
1. new knowledge about sustainable consumption, 2. resources/ideas that can be used with young people (Youth Environment Council), 3. how to communicate the information gained today. (Female, 22, Adelaide).
1. resources that you can access to keep updating ways to instigate change, 2. ideas on how to work with youth as a leader – direction, 3. new ways to communicate issues to others. (Female, 22, Adelaide).

Common responses to this question included:

#### ***Skills***

- leadership skills;
- get skills to make changes and take the message to others;
- confidence to share with others and take action; and
- to educate, inspire and show others.

#### ***Contacts and networking***

- meet others with similar interests or just meet new people generally; and
- get contacts for further information to follow-up later, including organisations and activities to get involved in.

#### **Motivation and inspiration**

##### ***Knowledge and information***

- existing programs and activities people could join with and learn from, especially Australian versus American examples;
- learn about what sustainable consumption is and the issues that are important;
- how to act and live more sustainably as an individual;
- knowledge of more sustainable practices at individual and community level;
- general and easy indicators for sustainability ; and
- share ideas and knowledge with others in the workshop, and listen and learn from others.

##### ***Equipped to make a difference***

- ideas and strategies for making a difference and implementing change in the community;
- know about solutions to some of the problems faced; and

- be able to take action and help for a better future.

#### ***The big picture***

- insight and understanding about sustainable consumption related issues;
- more understanding of human effect on the world;
- get a different view of the world; and
- understand more about poverty problems.

## **4.2 Learning about the workshop process and content**

### **Train-the-trainer workshops**

Based on conversations with people during and after the train-the-trainer workshops, they went very well and were well received. Those people who were able to participate in the convening of the youth workshops gained a lot of confidence for further work in this area. It was in the area of follow-up and ongoing engagement with the issue of sustainable consumption and the processes initiated by the capacity building process that most uncertainty existed and where the most is to be learned. The content of the workshop – in terms of the presentation of resources and the youth workshop design – was very straightforward and excited and inspired most people. However, participants in the train-the-trainer workshop had varying degrees of confidence and ability to integrate learning from the workshop into their ongoing work role. All expressed that they were keen to do so, but some felt it would require some thought, and even some lobbying to supervisors and organisations, to get a mandate to work more in this area. Where direct links existed between youth workshop participants, organisations and train-the-trainer participants, specific opportunities for follow-up were discussed. In each location, the importance of networking participants in the youth workshop was discussed, as was bringing in other interested young people who couldn't or didn't attend the youth workshop. In Bendigo, a commitment to connect everyone – youth workshop participants and trainers – through an online community was developed through the train-the-trainer dialogue. The Bendigo hosts presented this to the youth workshop participants on the following day. In other locations, clear strategies for follow-up were not articulated in the workshop or to participants in the youth workshop.

Across the train-the-trainer workshops, it was decided that the NYARS project team should set up an email network for all the trainers and host

organisations. This network would be used to communicate about ideas for follow-up, further opportunities, share ideas on activities, and generally attempt to make it easier for host organisations and those who participated in the train-the-trainer workshops to provide follow-up in their local community to the capacity building process. It was also agreed that the resources used to make the Sustainable Consumption Workbook would be made available online for the use of trainers and host organisations – in addition to those hard copy resources that were left with each host organisation to use in follow-up activities.

The post-train-the-trainer workshop evaluations, completed by 12 people (four males; five from Adelaide, four from Mornington Peninsula and three from Brisbane), provide further insights in the effectiveness of this aspect of the overall capacity building program. Firstly, those who completed the post-workshop evaluations found the workshop both **useful for incorporating sustainable consumption in to their own work** and in **preparing them for running the youth workshop – or elements of it – in the future.**

With regard to incorporating sustainable consumption issues in to their own work, eight people rated the workshop as quite useful, two as very useful, and two as not very useful. Some respondents recognised that sustainable consumption is currently outside the mandate of their organisation, with a sub-set of these now working within their groups to find ways to incorporate sustainable consumption in day-to-day activities. One person is trying to get ecological sustainability included in a local youth leadership program, and another is working to get a sustainable consumption workshop incorporated into a vocational preparation program offered by a local TAFE. A respondent from Adelaide, who said that these issues are outside her organisations' current focus, included some sustainable living tips in the organisations' quarterly newsletter and initiated a competition for young people to think of their own tips. Other people found it easier to take sustainable consumption in to their work. A participant in the Mornington Peninsula workshop is working with another teacher to develop a project for a cluster of schools that they work with. Another utilised the resources presented in existing environmental work with young people. One of the host organisations in Brisbane, Young Scientists of Australia, is in the process of revising the youth workshop to be used by YSA in schools.

A similar pattern of responses was seen in relation to how well the train-the-trainer workshop prepared participants for delivering the youth workshop in

the future. Nine people said the workshop was quite useful in this regard, two said it was very useful, and one person said that it wasn't very useful. Not unexpectedly, people who also participated in the youth workshop provided the two ratings of "very useful", and the person who rated it "not very useful" did not have this opportunity. Quite a few people suggested that actual experience of the youth workshop was/would be invaluable for understanding how to use the workshops effectively with young people and their potential. Two people who did not get to attend the youth workshops suggested that "simulations" or example activities during the train-the-trainer workshop would have enhanced people's learning and confidence in taking the workshop out into the field. It was also suggested that a meeting between train-the-trainer participants – or even a follow-up workshop – held after the youth workshop would have been useful, in order to brainstorm and plan follow-up activities, discuss running additional workshops, and the like. Those who attended the youth workshop could also share their experience with those who were not able to attend. Such a process could lead to train-the-trainer workshop participants collaboratively planning further workshops.

Further suggestions for enhancing the workshops usefulness included:

- providing copies of each resource to each participant;
- implementing follow-on projects after the youth workshop that train-the-trainer participants could be involved with;
- making it more of a future planning session rather than an information session;
- providing an electronic copy of the whole workshop and workbook, including the parts that were photocopied in, to each participant;
- providing a PowerPoint presentation to all participants that they could show to others;
- including student leaders in the train-the-trainer workshops to enhance ownership of projects;
- distributing a list of local attendees for each workshop; and
- allowing a gap between the train-the-trainer workshop and the youth workshop that would allow train-the-trainer participants to organise for young people from their organisations to attend, and also facilitate their own participation in the youth workshop.

Recommendations on providing train-the-trainer participants with a comprehensive set of resources they can take with them after the workshop would seem to be warranted given that the planned interaction between workshop participants did not

really occur and that people have mostly failed to use the host organisation as a resource hub. Some respondents did indicate that they intended to access some of the material in the future, others had utilised the online resource directory established by the NYARS project team, and one person had ordered some of the resource materials in for their own work.

The email list established to network all train-the-trainer workshop participants has had mixed success. Some post-workshop evaluation respondents have said that it has been useful, others have appreciated having the ongoing link to the program even though they haven't posted or utilised anything much as yet. Many have not utilised the group and others have

found that they have not had enough time, or have been overwhelmed by the number of emails. One post-workshop evaluation respondent suggested a weekly "information share" or "current issues" email may help to structure and provoke interaction and make the list more useful; another suggested that "trainers" and young people's stories relating to projects should be shared to inspire others.

### Youth workshops

The evaluations completed by participants at the conclusion of the youth workshop provided initial information on the relevance, effectiveness and utility of the workshop process and content.

**Table A2:6: Participant ratings of the youth workshop**

Location	Totally useless (1)	Not very useful (2)	Quite useful (3)	Very useful (4)	No answer
Bendigo			6	10	1
Mornington			1	4	3
Brisbane		1	5	5	
Adelaide			3	3	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>

Participants were asked to **rate how useful the workshop was** on a scale of one to four, with four being very useful. As is shown in Table A2:6, all but one person rated the workshop as quite useful or very useful. No ratings were recorded on four evaluations. The person who rated the workshop a two on its usefulness was studying sustainability and had this to say:

Info was good, activities were unnecessary.  
(Male, 17, Brisbane).

Another of the participants, while rating the workshop a three, was critical of the workshops content as too simplistic, as shown in her comment:

The core ideas of the program was very simplistic and didn't allow for in-depth discussions. (Female, 23, Bendigo).

This participant was working for an environmental NGO and had a good level of understanding of sustainability issues prior to the workshop. For others without this background, the workshops were seemingly a good introduction to the issues, as illustrated by the following quotes:

It opened my mind. (Male, 18, Mornington).

I think it was really good. I learnt a lot of things that I didn't know and it involved everyone. (Male, 16, Mornington).

Didn't have any idea now I have a good idea. (Male, 14, Bendigo).

I got a lot out of the day and I have a lot of useful information to take back to the school. (Male, 15, Bendigo).

Post-youth workshop evaluations, completed by nine young people (three male; five from Brisbane, three from Adelaide, one from Bendigo), asked people to rate, with the advantage of hindsight and experience, both **how useful they thought the workshop was in showing them ways to achieve more sustainable consumption and how useful it was in helping them act to enhance and promote more sustainable consumption as an individual and amongst those around them**. The responses are shown in Table A2:7 below. Most found it useful on both counts, although it was seemingly less useful for supporting action than showing ways to act.

**Table A2:7: Post-youth workshop evaluations of the workshop usefulness**

Question	Totally useless(1)	Not very useful (2)	Quite useful (3)	Very useful (4)
Showing ways to achieve			6	3
Helping to act		2	4	3

Participants were also asked to **rank the different “segments” of the workshop according to how useful they thought they would be in equipping them to be effective change agents for more sustainable consumption in their community.** The responses are shown in Table A2:8. The two ecological footprint exercises were ranked highly (1 = most useful) by most participants. In both Brisbane and Mornington

youth workshops, the ecological footprint exercise was extended from its initial timing because of the issues and discussion that was generated. In all workshops, the ecological footprint exercises were characterised by lively debate and sharing of stories, information and questions about sustainable consumption.

**Table A2:8: Rankings of youth workshop sections**

Section	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mode(s)
Ecological Footprint Survey	5	12	9	4	3	1	2	1	2
Ecological Footprint Exercise	10	5	8	2	3	5			1
YouthXChange	2	5	2	6	7	1	7	1	5, 7
Local Sustainability Guides	8	2	6	10	3	2	3	1	4
Sustainable Living Competition		2	5	4	5	6	3	8	8
Media Exercise	3	3		5	5	5	3	9	8
Resources Table	2	4	2	4	2	7	8	3	7
Action Planning	7	7	4	1	3	2	5	4	1, 2

\* Note: There was missing data for this item because people did not provide complete rankings or follow the instructions.

The local sustainability guide segment of the workshop was also perceived as being useful, although the rankings are a bit more spread out towards the middle and even tails away to being ranked as not being very useful by a few participants. The more information based activities – YouthXChange, the Sustainable Living Competition, and the Sustainable Consumption Resources Table – did not typically rank highly. Some people certainly found them useful, but not compared to other activities. It could be that these activities come in to their own more after the workshop when participants have more time to review the content of the information in their own time.

Reactions to the media exercise were particularly interesting. While a small number of participants ranked this activity as highly useful, most ranked it quite low. Some comments were written about it, as will be seen in the discussion soon about young people’s suggestions for improving the workshop. One comment was:

The advertising activity was probably not as useful as the brainstorming sessions. (Female, 18, Brisbane).

Some young people did react very positively and powerfully to the exercise, another larger group went

along with it but were not particularly enamoured, and there were some who found it mystifying and irrelevant. Those who liked this activity tended to take the advertisements that they made with them. One girl was going to use her advertisement to promote the upcoming 40-hour Famine in her school. There was quite a lengthy discussion in the Bendigo workshop about media issues – something that did not happen in other places because of both interest and time. The activity was certainly received and ranked most positively by Bendigo participants.

The rankings of the action planning segment of the workshop showed an interesting polarity. Young people tended to either rank it as quite useful or not of much use at all. In the Bendigo and Mornington workshops, it was split about half and half between seeing it as useful or not. In Brisbane, the action planning exercise was ranked highly at a ratio of 2:1. During the Brisbane workshop, a new approach to the action planning exercise was used. Participants were asked to share one action of theirs. It was written on a piece of butchers paper on the wall and then all participants were asked to brainstorm all the things that person would have to do to make that project a success. Each person wrote a single idea on a post-it note and stuck it to the butchers paper. This

was done for four or five actions. Participants were also encouraged to organise the post-it notes on the butchers paper into some sort of chronological order, i.e. create an action plan. The person who put up the idea took the butchers paper with their post-it notes home with them. This approach was also used in Adelaide, and ratings were more evenly spread – two rating it number one, one rating it number eight, and everyone else in the middle (four or five).

This process was not used in Bendigo or Mornington. In the Mornington workshop, individuals did their own action planning with no follow-up discussion. In Bendigo, participants were grouped according to their shared interests, organisations, locality, etc. to come up with action plans. This also seemed to work well. Each person shared one of the actions they were going to do with the whole group to finish off the workshop.

Those who completed the post-youth workshop evaluations indicated **which two workshop activities they found most useful based on their experience since the workshop**. The poster creation and “adbusters” activities – while getting mixed responses on workshop evaluations as to its utility – were mentioned as very useful on reflection, helping young people to analyse and challenge “propaganda” and realise how employing similar methods to sell positive messages could be very effective. The ecological footprint quiz was also mentioned frequently, with people using it as a touchstone for where they need to make personal changes to support more sustainable consumption in their own lives. Examples of how others have helped create a sustainable future for Australia, compiling ideas for action at the end of the workshops, and the brainstorming of ideas in small groups on services we have and need for more sustainable consumption were put forward by respondents. The action planning activity used in Brisbane and Adelaide was also mentioned, with one participant saying that they had adopted the method in their own work.

Participants in the youth workshops were asked to **suggest changes to the workshop to make it better**. A number of useful suggestions were made, and further comments about those segments that were liked or disliked were aired. The suggestions offered included:

- removing or altering the media activity – don’t actually make the posters, but have more discussion;
- more promotion or whatever is necessary to have a larger, more diverse group;
- more time – to go in to greater detail on the issues and activities; to allow more time to get to know the other participants, including more icebreaker activities;

- more emphasis on collective action from within the workshop group, looking at a couple of specific projects and how to go about implementing them;
- spend more time on how to communicate information from the workshop to other people, including communication strategies and models;
- have more resources available for people to take away, including hard copies for all participants of those resources that were discussed in the workshop; and
- give people information on relevant annual activities/events they can participate in.

Respondents to the post-youth workshop evaluation also made **recommendations on how to improve the workshop to better support follow-up action**. One person recommended that notes from the workshop could have been written up, detailing what it was the group managed to talk about and brainstorm for the day – at least the most common and major themes – and circulate this to people after the workshop, along with a contact list for other workshop participants. Someone else suggested that workshop participants be sent monthly email reminders that revisit the goals and commitments that were made at the workshop. A suggestion was also made that the workshop should include speakers sharing about what they had done to help achieve sustainable consumption. Another idea was that it was perhaps unrealistic to expect workshop participants to be able to lead and implement their own project; instead maybe a few projects could be organised by local groups, with necessary funding, and then workshop participants could assist with one of these projects.

In a similar vein, i.e. with ready made actions for young people to take, another suggestion was to prepare a kit for each person to take away at the end of the workshop that would provide information and tools to assist them in introducing others to the concepts discussed in the workshop, such as copies of the adbusters post cards, pages from the adbusters magazines, etc.

Two participants suggested that the action planning component of the workshop could be expanded so that every person left the workshop with a project plan, developed with the assistance of all the other workshop participants. Spending time on developing clear plans for collective actions, such as the carpooling proposal in the Brisbane workshop, was also suggested.

By far the most common suggestion – put forward by six of the workshop participants – was the need for follow-up workshops and meetings to bring participants together again. Some felt this would help maintain interest and motivation. Others wanted these further gatherings to focus on action planning, assisting in achieving individual and project goals, and collective problem solving. One suggestion was that the youth workshop itself should be two workshops, adding a second component to the existing workshop that brings people back together after they have attempted to implement their actions to share learning and assist each other in being more successful.

any, with other participants, host organisations or train-the-trainer participants. If they had accessed resources, this had been through the Internet. One person had utilised the MSN group set up by the Brisbane host organisation, Young Scientists of Australia, but indicated that activity had died down very quickly after the workshop. Planned online groups in other locations did not eventuate. The plans mentioned previously for post-workshop activity in Bendigo were disrupted due to a family tragedy for the trainer and host organisation representative who was to look after creating an online community and the follow-up.

### 4.3 General comments and reflections

#### Reflections on post train-the-trainer and youth workshop interaction and networking

Those young people who responded to the post-youth workshop evaluations had very little contact, if

#### Exciting and disappointing aspects of the capacity building program

The post-youth workshop evaluations asked about **the most exciting and most disappointing things about participating in the process** of the capacity building program. Table A2:9.

**Table A2:9: Exciting and disappointing aspects of participating in the youth workshop and program**

Exciting	Disappointing
Working with new people, who are working towards similar goals, sharing ideas and having experienced a new workshop that felt fresh, up-to-date and really relevant to young people	Realising how screwed the world really is if we continue to live in our current fashion
Learning about what I can do as an individual, despite how insignificant it may seem, one person can have an enormous impact	Learning more about current consumer attitudes and corporate greed
Meeting new, like-minded people	Lack of time and resources to do anything
My desire to help out after learning more about the issues was the most exciting part	I haven't heard from anyone or been able to get in contact with anyone
Being able to spread the word a little	Low participation rates
New ideas on educating this topic to the greater community	
Realising that I do live pretty sustainably, and that I would only have to take a few minutes every day and make a few changes, to live even more sustainably! It's just a matter of getting motivated to do so after a long day at work!	
Adding to my world view in terms of a sustainable future	

#### General comments on the capacity building program and workshops

I came here not knowing what this was about and left knowing a lot and also knowing how to improve to become more sustainable in consuming. (Female, 17, Bendigo).

It was great, am glad I came! Looking forward to making a difference at home and in my community. (Female, 19, Bendigo).

Gave us avenues to actually do something in the community. (Female, 19, Brisbane).

Really useful workshop – would be really great to get

more people (school aged) who don't have an interest in the environment involved and see what impact this workshop has on them. (Female, 22, Adelaide).

I think it's a great workshop that many, many young people could benefit from in a variety of ways creating positive change in their communities by being young agents of change. (Female, Adelaide).

“Micro” activism (e.g. pamphlets, of forming discussion groups), as I see it, has very limited impact when compared to the power that legislation and subsidies have. Ultimately people in a system that promotes self-interest respond best to prices and perceptions, not ideals. (Male, Brisbane).

## Appendix 3: “Sustainable consumption – young Australians as agents of change”

### WORKSHOP WORKSHEET

To assist us with both the research objectives of this workshop and our follow-up with you after the workshops completion, please complete this worksheet and hand in to one of the workshop facilitators before you leave today.

All personal details provided on this worksheet will be used to facilitate future contact with you in regards to this workshop and its follow-up – and to connect your responses provided now to those you provide in the follow-up evaluation.

Any and all report content developed as part of this project from the information supplied in this worksheet will not refer to your comments in such a way as to identify you. Your personal information will not be retained or used beyond the scope of this project. If any desire or need for use of personal information does arise, you will be contacted to provide your informed consent prior to its use.

We need some general information on you ...

<b>Your Name</b>	<b>Who do you live with?</b> (e.g. family, house mates)
<b>Your Gender</b> male / female	<b>What do you “do”?</b> (e.g. student, unemployed, working)
<b>Your Age</b>	<b>If studying, tell us what</b> (e.g. what year at school, what subjects at TAFE/University, etc.)
	<b>If working, tell us about your job</b> (e.g. lawyer, teacher, waiter @ café)

A. How do you rate your general level of interest in the following issues (tick what applies):

Issue	Very High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
The Environment					
Third World Poverty					
Fair Trade					
Materialism and Consumerism					
Youth Employment					
Politics					

B. What groups or projects have you participated in prior to this workshop? (e.g. school or local youth councils, volunteering for community groups, special events such as Clean Up Australia Day or Walk Against Want, etc.).



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For further information or queries on this project, please contact:  
Matthew Bentley via [m.Bentley@griffith.edu.au](mailto:m.Bentley@griffith.edu.au)  
or Cameron Neil via [camerononeil@iypf.org](mailto:camerononeil@iypf.org).

C. Why did you want to come to this workshop today?

D. What are 3 (three) things you would like to get out of the workshop today?

1.

2.

3.

**We want your feedback on today's workshop and some of the tools and ideas presented**

A. How useful was the workshop today in showing you ways to achieve more sustainable consumption? Give a score 1 to 4 where 1 is Totally Useless, 2 is Not Very Useful, 3 is Quite Useful, and 4 is Very Useful. If you have any comments, also write them in the space provided.

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B. Rank the following sections of today's workshop according to how useful you think they will be in equipping YOU to be an effective change agent for more sustainable consumption in your community.  
1 (one) = the most useful.

- Ecological Footprint survey
  - Ecological Footprint small group exercise on barriers and solutions
  - YouthXchange
  - Local Sustainability Guides
  - Sustainable Living Competition
  - Media exercise (Adbusters)
  - Sustainable Consumption Resources table
  - Action Planning
-

C. Based on your own experience, and today's workshop, what do you think is the most important activity to achieve more sustainable consumption? (e.g. countering consumerist messages, education in schools, training for projects, etc.).

D. What are some things you think the government and community needs to do to support young Australians like you to work towards more sustainable consumption?

E. Reflecting on today's media exercise, what key messages do you think are necessary about sustainable consumption for young Australians?

F. What messages do you think would be most successful in promoting sustainable consumption to young people?

G. What are 3 (three) things you will do from today to help achieve more sustainable consumption?

1.

2.

3.

---

H. Thinking about the actions you identified at G, what do you expect to be your 3 (three) biggest barriers to helping achieve more sustainable consumption in your own life and in your community? How might you overcome them?

Barrier	How to overcome
1.	
2.	
3.	

I. Name 2 (two) things you would change about today's workshop to make it better

1.

2.

J. Anything else you want to say?

As part of our research, we want to contact you between 4 and 6 weeks after this workshop with a survey. The survey will ask you about your experiences of implementing ideas from the workshop, some of the barriers you have found, what things have helped you, and your assessment then of the value of the workshop.

Would you prefer we send you this survey by post or email?    Post / Email    (circle)

If you want Post, please write your postal address below. If email, please write your email address below (use CAPITALS and write clearly).

## Appendix 4: Youth and sustainable consumption survey

- Have you ever thought about how your personal consumption choices can affect your health, the environment, and the wellbeing of other people in both Australia and overseas?
- Do you believe your consumption choices could have an influence over the lives of people who live thousands of kilometres away? Why do you buy certain products and use various services such as electricity and water?
- Have you ever heard of Sustainable Consumption? What does it mean to you?
- If you are aged between 12 and 28 years, please take 10 minutes to consider these questions while you fill in the following questionnaire.

This survey is being conducted for the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) by Griffith University and the International Young Professionals Foundation. The study is exploring how young people can make changes in their own consumption and be catalysts for change in the wider community helping to lead society in more sustainable lifestyle choices. Your responses to the questions below will remain strictly confidential. Thank you for your participation!

Please place an 'X' next to your chosen response(s) below:

**Q1. How would you rate your concern for the environment?**

- Very concerned
- Concerned
- Concerned only a little
- Not concerned at all

**Q2. How would you rate your concern for people who lack basic necessities like food and shelter?**

- Very concerned
- Concerned
- Concerned only a little
- Not concerned at all

**Q3. The choices I make when shopping or when using various services can have impacts on the environment and the wellbeing of other people.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q4. What kind of impact do you think your consumption choices have on the environment and wellbeing of others?**

- Very big
- Quite big
- A little
- None at all

**Q5. What does 'sustainable consumption' mean to you? (maximum of 3 choices)**

- Society needs to consume less
- Society needs to find more efficient ways to consume
- I need to consume less
- I need to find more efficient ways to consume
- Some people need to consume more
- Looking after the environment
- Thinking about future generations
- All of the above
- Don't know
- Something else (please explain):

**Q6. Do you ever consider the effect(s) a product may have on the environment or on the wellbeing of someone else (e.g. child labour) before buying it?**

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

**Q7. How much influence do you feel like you have over which products and services you choose?**

- Very much
- Quite a lot
- A little
- None at all



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**Please return to:**

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or

Matthew Bentley  
c/o Amanda Norman  
Environmental CRC Centre  
Nathan Campus  
Griffith University  
Queensland 4111

**Q8. What are the most important factors in deciding which products you buy or services you use? [Please rank in order of importance from 1 to 10 (1 being highest, 10 lowest)]**

- My friends
- The media (TV, radio, billboards)
- The brand (Nike, Coke)
- Sustainability of product (e.g. damage to environment or work conditions of people who made the product)
- Myself (my image)
- Product reliability
- Product quality
- Price of product
- My family
- My finances (money)

**Q9. I think young people in general buy too much stuff.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q10. I am responsible for making my consumption choices more sustainable.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q11. By changing the amount of and/or things I buy, it would have a positive effect on the environment and the wellbeing of others.**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Q12. What is the number one reason why you don't always choose green or sustainable products or services (e.g. recycled paper, travel by bike rather than car) [1 response only]**

- Too boring
- Not enough information
- Not convenient to my needs
- Too expensive
- No substitutes to everyday products
- Not easily available
- I don't know any sustainable products or services
- I have never thought about this before
- I do not think it is necessary
- I choose sustainable things all the time!

**Q13. What would be the best way(s) to encourage others to accept more sustainable consumption choices? [Please rank in order from 1 to 5]**

- Educating in schools, universities
- Involving the Media
- Getting access to the government
- Taking action as part of a youth group
- Telling companies what you want

**Q14. How old are you?**

- 12–14 years
- 15–17 years
- 18–24 years
- 25–28 years

**Q15. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**Q16. Where do you live in Australia?**

- Rural
- Regional
- Metropolitan

## Appendix 5: United Nations guidelines for consumer protection, “Section G: Promotion of sustainable consumption”

42. Sustainable consumption includes meeting the needs of present and future generations for goods and services in ways that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

43. Responsibility for sustainable consumption is shared by all members and organisations of society, with informed consumers, Government, business, labour organisations, and consumer and environmental organisations playing particularly important roles. Informed consumers have an essential role in promoting consumption that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, including through the effects of their choices on producers. Governments should promote the development and implementation of policies for sustainable consumption and the integration of those policies with other public policies. Government policy-making should be conducted in consultation with business, consumer and environmental organisations, and other concerned groups. Business has a responsibility for promoting sustainable consumption through the design, production and distribution of goods and services. Consumer and environmental organisations have a responsibility for promoting public participation and debate on sustainable consumption, for informing consumers, and for working with Government and business towards sustainable consumption.

44. Governments, in partnership with business and relevant organisations of civil society, should develop and implement strategies that promote sustainable consumption through a mix of policies that could include regulations; economic and social instruments; sectoral policies in such areas as land use, transport, energy and housing; information programs to raise awareness of the impact of consumption patterns; removal of subsidies that promote unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; and promotion of sector-specific environmental-management best practices.

45. Governments should encourage the design, development and use of products and services that are safe and energy and resource efficient, considering their full life-cycle impacts. Governments should encourage recycling programs that encourage consumers to both recycle wastes and purchase recycled products.

46. Governments should promote the development and use of national and international environmental health and safety standards for products and services; such standards should not result in disguised barriers to trade.

47. Governments should encourage impartial environmental testing of products.

48. Governments should safely manage environmentally harmful uses of substances and encourage the development of environmentally sound alternatives for such uses. New potentially hazardous substances should be evaluated on a scientific basis for their long-term environmental impact prior to distribution.

49. Governments should promote awareness of the health-related benefits of sustainable consumption and production patterns, bearing in mind both direct effects on individual health and collective effects through environmental protection.

50. Governments, in partnership with the private sector and other relevant organisations, should encourage the transformation of unsustainable consumption patterns through the development and use of new environmentally sound products and services and new technologies, including information and communication technologies, that can meet consumer needs while reducing pollution and depletion of natural resources.

51. Governments are encouraged to create or strengthen effective regulatory mechanisms for the protection of consumers, including aspects of sustainable consumption.

52. Governments should consider a range of economic instruments, such as fiscal instruments and internalisation of environmental costs, to promote sustainable consumption, taking into account social needs, the need for disincentives for unsustainable practices and incentives for more sustainable practices, while avoiding potential negative effects for market access, in particular for developing countries.

53. Governments, in cooperation with business and other relevant groups, should develop indicators, methodologies and databases for measuring progress towards sustainable consumption at all levels. This information should be publicly available.

54. Governments and international agencies should take the lead in introducing sustainable practices in their own operations, in particular through their procurement policies. Government procurement, as appropriate, should encourage development and use of environmentally sound products and services.

55. Governments and other relevant organisations should promote research on consumer behaviour related to environmental damage in order to identify ways to make consumption patterns more sustainable.

## Appendix 6: Sustainable consumption policy instrument indicative matrix

Actor	Action*	Policy Instrument	Example
CONSUMERS	Use fewer resources	Economic	Energy tax
		Regulatory	Speed limits in air polluted areas
		Social	Water saving campaign
		Other policy influences	Public health campaigns
CONSUMERS	Use better resources	Economic	Solar power subsidy
		Regulatory	Temporary bans on using drinking water for gardens
		Social	Green electricity schemes
		Other policy influences	Physical planning regulations for local windmills
CONSUMERS	Use fewer goods	Economic	Motor vehicle tax
		Regulatory	Free motorway zones for car sharing
		Social	Promotion of library
		Other policy influences	Tax incentives influencing household size
CONSUMERS	Use better goods	Economic	Leaded-petrol taxes
		Regulatory	Environmental standards in car maintenance schemes
		Social	Promotion campaigns for fair trade coffee
		Other policy influences	Agricultural policies promoting industrial food products
CONSUMERS	Produce less waste	Economic	Recycle premiums
		Regulatory	Local waste separation regulations
		Social	Awareness campaigns on avoiding packaging
		Other policy influences	Safety and hygiene regulations
PRODUCERS	Improve production process	Economic	Tradable permits
		Regulatory	Emission standards
		Social	Codes of conduct
		Other policy influences	Social legislation
PRODUCERS	Supply better goods and info	Economic	Research grants
		Regulatory	Construction standards for e-efficient houses
		Social	Voluntary Reporting Initiatives
		Other policy influences	Information technology leading to greater transparency
PRODUCERS	Supply new goods or services	Economic	Taxes/subsidies
		Regulatory	Product standards
		Social	Network building of pioneers
		Other policy influences	Labour cost policies

Actor	Action*	Policy Instrument	Example
<b>RETAILERS</b>	Practice good housekeeping (water, energy, waste) Economic	Economic	Taxes/subsidies
		Regulatory	Waste regulations
		Social	Voluntary initiative (for instance green supermarkets)
		Other policy influences	Physical planning
<b>RETAILERS</b>	Supply better goods and info	Economic	Added value tax exceptions
		Regulatory	Information standards
		Social	Voluntary initiatives for subscription schemes for organic food
		Other policy influences	Media policies
<b>RETAILERS</b>	Provide facilities for recycling and repair services	Economic	Local subsidies
		Regulatory	N/A
		Social	Promotional events such as local “recycling” weeks
		Other policy influences	National labour cost policies
<b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b>	Green procurement	Economic	Temporary economic incentives for “buying green”
		Regulatory	Procurement standards
		Social	Awareness campaigns
		Other policy influences	International harmonisation and competition policies
<b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b>	Supply better infrastructure and information	Economic	Budget grants for innovative projects
		Regulatory	Environmental standards for use of materials
		Social	Consumer lobbying
		Other policy influences	General budget policies
<b>NGO'S, RESEARCHERS</b>	Information and advice, lobbying, research	Economic	Subsistence subsidies
		Regulatory	N/A
		Social	Research pioneers networks
		Other policy influences	Curricula development

\*Actions are abbreviated. “Goods” refers to products and services. “Better” refers to more eco-efficient (more sustainable).

Source: OECD. (2002) *Policies to Promote Sustainable Consumption*. Paris: OECD.

### Appendix 7: Four roles of activism, by Bill Moyer 1990

<p><b>Ineffective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsively anti authority, anti organisational rules and structures</li> <li>• Self identifying as radical on society's fringe</li> <li>• Isolated from mass base</li> <li>• Victim behaviour and attitude; angry, judgmental, dogmatic</li> <li>• Stuck in beliefs of absolute truth and moral superiority</li> <li>• Acts out strong personal upset emotions, needs regardless of movement's needs</li> <li>• Behaviour indistinguishable from agent provocateur</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protests and says NO! to violations of positive values</li> <li>• Puts problems and policies in public spotlight</li> <li>• Takes non-violent direct action including civil disobedience</li> <li>• Guided by strategy and tactics</li> <li>• Actions exciting and often risky</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds people power; educates, convinces and involves majority of ordinary citizens</li> <li>• Puts issue on political agenda</li> <li>• Forms networks and mass based organisations</li> <li>• Promotes strategy for long term social movement</li> <li>• Nurtures, supports and empowers activists and grass roots</li> <li>• Promotes alternatives and paradigm shifts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ineffective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utopian: promotes visions of perfection/ lives alternative in isolation</li> <li>• Promotes only minor reform</li> <li>• Tunnel vision: advocates single approach, opposes other ways</li> <li>• Patriarchal and oppressive</li> <li>• Ignores personal needs and issues of activists</li> </ul>
<b>REBEL</b>			
<b>REFORMER</b>			
<p><b>Ineffective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "realistic politics" – promotes only minor reforms – more acceptable</li> <li>• organisational maintenance needs replace movement needs; rigid and self-serving leadership</li> <li>• coaptation: staff identify more with official powerholders than with the movement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses official mainstream systems and institutions e.g. courts, Parliament, local government, corporations to get goals and values adopted into official policy</li> <li>• uses variety of means: lobbying, lawsuits, candidates, official occasions, etc.</li> <li>• watchdog successes and protect against backlash</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• perceived as "Normal Citizen"</li> <li>• grounded in centre of society</li> <li>• protects movement against marginalisation, able to build bridges with new groups</li> <li>• gives courage and legitimacy to others to take up issue</li> <li>• promotes positive values, principles and symbols</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ineffective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• naive citizen: does not yet realise that powerholders and institutions serve elite interests at the expense of others</li> </ul> <p><b>Or</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Super patriot: blind obedience to powerholders</li> </ul>
<b>CHANGE AGENT</b>			
<b>CITIZEN</b>			



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