MY Pledge:

I will carbon offset my flights

The Pledge: I will carbon offset my flights

The Issue

Many of us love to travel, but flights produce a HUGE amount of greenhouse gases. Higher levels of greenhouse gases traps the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure including coral bleaching, ocean acidification, and storms.

Worldwide (in 2015), flights accounted for 12% of carbon dioxide emissions from all transports sources, and approximately 2% of global carbon dioxide emissions.
Resource: www.atag.org/facts-figures.html

The Action

The most effective action is to minimise your number of flying hours. Is it possible for you to take one less return flight a year? When you do fly, choose to fly with an airline with a good emission reduction record, and carbon offset your trip. Another alternative to offsetting is "insetting", or starting your own carbon scheme, such as buying solar panels for your house.

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MY Pledge:

I will learn about my local reefs

The Pledge: I will learn about my local reefs

The Issue

Some members of the wider community may feel disconnected from what is happening to our reefs. That's understandable, as it's difficult to show concern about something to which we aren't personally connected. When people don't understand or appreciate their local resources, they are less likely to take steps to protect it, and our reefs need all the help they can get! Inspiring passion for reef conservation is essential for the future of our reefs, and education and involvement are key to doing that.

The Action

Learn to love your reefs! Find out what local reefs are closest (and accessible) to you and start learning! www.reefcheckaustralia.org is a good place to start- we have volunteers monitoring reefs along the QLD (and WA) coastline with information about each area we visit. Local dive shops and community groups are another great place to source information. Or start googling! If you are ready to explore, see if there are any guided tours or educational presentations available. Local knowledge is the best way to become acquainted with an area and guides often have a true passion for what they teach, as well as a scientific background and plenty of information you won't find elsewhere.

No reef nearby? You may be surprised by your proximity to important estuarine, mangrove, seagrass and/or coastal areas and by the abundance and diversity of marine life found all around you! All of these habitats are intricately linked, so getting involved in any natural area is a great way to develop appreciation and understanding. When people understand and appreciate their local reef resources, they are more likely to actively participate in protecting it. So get out and explore your local area and make sure you share your experience! Talk about it, post about it, and encourage more people to better understand and protect it!

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MY Pledge:

I will seek alternatives to single use plastic items

The Pledge: I will seek alternatives to single use plastic items

The Issue

Plastic is made from non-renewable, finite resources (petroleum). Despite this, approximately 300 million tons of plastic is produced every year, and more than 9 million tons of plastic is dumped into our oceans every year. One million sea birds and 100,000 marine mammals are killed annually from plastic in our oceans via ingestion and entanglement. Single use plastic comes in familiar forms uch as plastic bags, straws, water bottles and most food packaging.

Most are used once before being thrown away. These plastics can break up into tiny particles, releasing toxic chemicals which make their way into our food and water supply. Petroleum based plastic is also difficult to recycle; as chemicals and new materials need to be added to the recycling (downcycling) process.

The Action

Reducing our addiction to plastic is easy if we do it step by step. Carry a reusable water bottle and refill wherever possible. Bring your own produce bags when shopping. Refuse excess packaging. Stop using plastic straws. Bring a keep-cup for your take-away coffee. Use beeswax wraps instead of cling film. Buy soap/shampoo bars instead of liquid soap/shampoo that comes in plastic dispensers, and shop at your local farmers market to buy local produce without plastic.

For plenty more tips check out: www.plasticfreejuly.org

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MY Pledge:

I will COMPOST my fOOd SCRaPS

The Pledge: I will compost my food scraps

The Issue

Organic waste in landfill generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Composting is simply the process of turning organic matter we have no use for into beneficial nutrients. By composting you can help to reduce the amount of waste that is being directed into our landfill, reducing concentrated, toxic chemicals and methane gas being released into the atmosphere. Composting also cuts down on the usage of chemical fertilizers, which can be harmful to our waterways.

The Action

Stop throwing your organic waste into the rubbish bin and instead start composting! It's a great activity for kids (and adults!) to get involved in. Simply combine your organic wastes, including coffee grinds, egg shells and tea bags with yard trimmings and manures (if any) into a composting barrel/area. Add bulking agents such as wood chips (this is necessary to accelerate the breakdown of organic materials) and allow the finished material to stabilize and mature. Then distribute on your garden. Simple!

By composting wasted food and other organics, methane emissions are significantly reduced. Compost can help aid reforestation, wetlands restoration, and habitat revitalization efforts by improving contaminated, compacted, and marginal soils.

Resource: www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/reducing-impact-wasted-food-feeding-soil-and-composting#benefits

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MY Pledge:

I will use reusable containers

The Pledge: I will use reusable containers

The Issue

Plastic is a HUGE problem across the world. Every piece of plastic ever made still exists. This year alone, over 9 million tonnes of plastic will enter the worlds oceans, having devastating effects on our environment; endangering wildlife, destroying habitats and entering our food chain.

Single use plastic containers add to the ever-increasing plastic issue. Plastic does not breakdown, instead breaking up into smaller and smaller pieces, right down to the molecular level, making it the perfect size for animals to eat. These tiny microplastics act like toxic sponges, soaking up chemicals found within the waters they travel, becoming up to 1000 times more toxic than the waters that surround them.

The Action

The most effective action is to simply say no to single use throwaway containers, and instead reuse the containers you already have! Glass jars make fantastic storage vessels for soups and drinks, and sturdy reusable containers can be used at many butchers, supermarkets and take away shops, just be sure to ask before you go in, and make sure your containe rs are clean as some stores may refuse them if they are dirty.

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MY Pledge:

I will reduce my meat and dairy consumption

The Pledge: I will reduce my meat and dairy consumption

The Issue

The production and processing of meat and dairy products are some of the most resource intensive and unsustainable industries worldwide (FAO UN, 2006). They are responsible for more global greenhouse gas emissions that all means of transport combined.

Around 70% of agricultural land and 30% of the global land surface are used for animal production. Meat production is highly inefficient (1kg of beef requires 25kg of grain (feed) and 15,000L of water) and attributes 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions from methane (from animal digestion), deforestation of carbon rich trees, and large amounts of artificial fertilizers required. The Australian Dairy industry accounts for another 10% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, or about 2% of total national emissions. Higher levels of greenhouse gases trap the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure from heat stress, ocean acidification, and storms.

The Action

You don't have to cut out all meat and dairy products, but aim to reduce your consumption of meat, dairy, and other unsustainable food sources. Start off with Meatless Mondays, or substitute one of these food groups with an easy alternative – for example, use coconut, rice, almond milk instead of cow milk. Plant-based meat alternatives are also becoming increasingly available (and delicious!) so take the opportunity to try something new! You can also include your friends and family - try cooking for them, or encouraging plant-based food shares, like picnics or hotpot nights.

Resources: theconversation.com/five-ways-the-meat-on-your-plate-is-killing-the-planet-76128
www.dairyclimatetoolkit.com.au/climate-and-greenhouse-basics/implications-for-dairy-industry
www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/love-meat-how-to-eat-green-fair-sustainably/
www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-28/hamad-meat-the-hidden-culprit-of-climate-change/5414894

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MY Pledge:

I will Upcycle and recycle to give Old stuff a new life

The Pledge: I will upcycle and recycle to give old stuff a new life

The Issue

20 million tons of garbage is added to landfill in Australia each year. Many of the materials that end up as waste contain toxic substances. These toxins leach into our soil, our groundwater and our oceans - becoming environmental hazards for a variety of habitats for years to come. So many products are made using finite resources and rather than fixing them when they break, our items are thrown away, filling up landfill and taking years to break up (if at all).

The Action

Being environmentally conscious on recycling day and sorting your rubbish into compost, recycling and general waste bins is fantastic – but it's important to think about producing less rubbish to begin with. Before sending anything to landfill stop and think about if it could be fixed, transformed into something new, or gifted to give it a new life!

Recycling decreases the amount of garbage going to landfill and also provides a resource for new products to be made from, rather than continually using up virgin material. BUT recycling also uses energy to create new items. Recycling is great, but it is not the only answer.

Upcycling is a process of turning what would otherwise be junk, into something useful or of value, decreasing the amount of waste going to landfill. Art can often be created through this upcycling process.

By utilising charity op-shops both for taking your items someone else might like, and to look for second hand items for yourself prior to purchasing brand new products, you'll save money, support a local charity and be part of the solution of avoiding landfill.

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MY Pledge:

I will use my reusable coffee cup for when I'm on the go

The Pledge: I will use my reusable coffee cup for when I'm on the go

The Issue

One billion coffee cups in Australia are sent to landfill each year. Disposable coffee cups amount to over 20% of landfill waste, a disturbing figure and one that can be significantly lowered with a little effort.

Single use coffee cups also require ongoing materials and energy for manufacturing and transporting cups to the store (and to landfill). Disposable cups (no matter the brand- even 'compostable' cups) cannot be recycled or composted as they have a thin layer of plastic (made from non-renewable resources) that stops liquids seeping out. This thin layer cannot be separated out by mechanical recycling sorters and can contaminate the recycling when placed with true recyclable products.

The Action

Switch to a reusable coffee cup and directly reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. Reusing items helps save energy and resources that would otherwise be consumed. Just make sure you check how many uses are required for your reusable cup, as it's important to use them as long as you can to create a benefit to the environment.

Whether your cup is made of silicon, glass or a ceramic one from home- try incorporating it into your daily routine. If you forget- either sit it and enjoy, or simply go without- you will quickly start remembering!

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MY Pledge:

I will use reef friendly products like sunscreen

The Pledge: I will use reef friendly products like sunscreen

The Issue

The Issue: As Australians- we spend a lot of time enjoying the outdoors, exposed to the sun and UV rays. Most of us know to slip, slop, slap to protect ourselves from the suns harmful rays, but, did you know that many sunscreens contain chemicals such as Oxybenzone (BP-3 or Benzophenone) and Octinoxate which is damaging our local reefs. Up to 14,000 tonnes of sunscreen reportedly ends up in/on coral reefs every year.

These popular active ingredients in chemical sunscreens can potentially increase coral's susceptibility to bleaching, stunt their growth, and ultimately cause their death by disrupting a corals hormone and causing excess calcium carbonate production (causing juvenile corals to become encased inside their own skeleton; leading to death).

We rely on coral reefs for a variety of reasons including food, coastline protection, medicines, tourism and so much more. So taking a simple step like your sunscreen purchase is a great way to help look after reefs!

The Action

Look at the ingredients of your sunscreen next time you go to stock up. Keep an eye out for "Physical sunblock" products over "Chemical sunblock". A physical sunblock creates a barrier between the sun and the skin and contains either Zinc oxide or Titanium dioxide as the active ingredient instead of a chemical that acts like a sponge for harmful rays and absorbs into the skin. You will still be protected from the sun's harmful rays, and you will also be helping to protect our reefs from damage.

Resource: www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/oxybenzone-chemical-sunscreen_us_5aeb38b0e4b0c4f1931ffce0

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MY Pledge:

I will ChOOse renewable energy for my hOme

The Pledge: I will choose renewable energy for my home

The Issue

Energy is the largest single contributor to global emissions of greenhouse gases. Currently, Australians are dependent on fossil-fuels; a non-renewable energy source. Electricity generated from these sources (coal, natural gas, and petroleum products) comprised 88% of the total electricity produced by Australian businesses in 2014-15.

Higher levels of greenhouse gases trap the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure from heat stress, ocean acidification, and storms.

The Action

An effective way to help combat global emissions is to use renewable energy (such as solar, wind and hydro) in your home. By using renewable energy you will avoid and reduce nitrogen oxide emissions, sulphur oxide and carbon dioxide emissions. Renewable energy can also help improve air quality due to decreased burning of fossil fuels. You might install your own renewable energy option or consider purchasing the renewable energy option from your regular provider.
Resource: www.energymatters.com.au/faqs/renewable-energy-faq

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MY Pledge:

I will use public transport, walk or cycle when I can

The Pledge: I will use public transport, walk or cycle when I can

The Issue

Road transport is an essential element of the Australian transport network due to the sheer distance between our cities. But our cars are responsible for 46% of our transport associated greenhouse gas emissions (18% in 2017). Australia has the second highest level of car ownership in the world (18.8 million cars and 24.4 million people in 2017)- and everyone wants to travel by his or her own car, adding to our high fuel consumption (3rd highest in the world per capita), in addition to creating congestion, traffic jams and stress.

Higher levels of greenhouse gases trap the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure from heat stress, ocean acidification, and storms.

The Action

Walk, run, skip, cycle, car pool or use public transport! All of the above produces significantly less air pollution by moving people more efficiently. Start small to make a big difference: skip the car and walk to the local store instead. Car pool with a mate and share expenses and a chat! Decrease your stress and increase your health by changing the way you travel- even just once a week. How can you cut down on your solo travel?

Resource: www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/transport-emissions-and-climate-solutions

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MY Pledge:

I will bring my REUSABLE bags when shopping

The Pledge: I will bring my REUSABLE bags when shopping

The Issue

Plastic bags are everywhere. Despite the ban on light weight plastic bags, there are still millions of plastic bags (over 80 million) littered every year around the world, ending up in landfill, in our waterways and in our oceans, with devastating effects on our environment; endangering wildlife, destroying habitats and entering our food chain. Its estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean (by weight) than fish.

Some plastic bags can be recycled. Light, thin, bags used to package food can be recycled at most supermarkets. Thick, heavy bags can also be recycled (at fewer collection points), but they can't be mixed with the other bags.

Plastic bags may also be listed as degradable, biodegradable or compostable. Compostable plastic bags are designed to break down in compost facility conditions only, not sea water. Degradable bags degrade through light, heat or oxygen. In the right conditions they can break down into carbon dioxide, water and methane. However, these conditions are seldom met. Degradable bags still take a long time to break up into smaller (and harder to collect) pieces, creating a huge issue in our marine environment.

The Action

Use whatever reusable bags you already have. Reusing is the best way to reduce the amount of waste created. Don't have any? Try making no-sew bags out of T-shirts you were going to throw out. And make sure you keep a few reusable bags around your home, in your car and in your handbag- that way you won't forget them!

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MY Pledge:

I will dry my washing on the clothes line

The Pledge: I will dry my washing on the clothes line

The Issue

Clothes dryers are one of the most energy consuming appliances in a home. Using an electric clothes dryer generates around 2kg of greenhouse gas per hour if the electricity is generated by burning fossil fuels. A typical load of clothes (taking 1.5 – 2hours) will generate up to 4kg of greenhouse gas, in addition to wearing out your clothes much faster.

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MY Pledge:

I will turn off lights and appliances when not in use

The Pledge: I will reduce my meat and dairy consumption

The Issue

The production and use of energy is the largest single contributor to global emissions of greenhouse gases, because most electricity is still generated from non-renewable fossil fuels; coal, natural gas, and petroleum products (88% of the total electricity produced by Australian businesses in 2014-15).

The average Australian household wastes (or overuses) as much as 20% of the electricity we pay for, costing over $400 a year in a mid-sized home. Stand-by power can use up to 8% of a household's total electricity. For most homes a 10% reduction in electricity consumption can save $200 a more a year off our electricity bill and nearly ¾ of a tonne of carbon dioxide pollution.

Higher levels of greenhouse gases trap the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure from heat stress, ocean acidification, and storms.

The Action

Switching power off or powering down appliances when not in use is a great way to reduce your energy consumption and save you money at the same time! Every light or electric gadget left on when it is not needed is wasting energy and money and is causing pollution that is unnecessary and abunadant.

Resource: www.threeactionsproject.org/Actions/Unplug-Appliances-When-Not-In-Use.php

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MY Pledge:

I will not use plastic straws

The Pledge: I will not use plastic straws

The Issue

Every day over 500 million straws are used and thrown out around the world. These straws end up in landfill, in our waterways and in our oceans, with devastating effects on our environment; endangering wildlife, destroying habitats and entering our food chain. Its estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean (by weight) than fish.
Most plastic straws cannot be recycled as they are too lightweight to make it through mechanical recycling sorters. Compostable plastic straws are only designed to break down in compost facility conditions, not sea water.

The most effective and easiest action is to simply say no to single use plastic straws. Get in the habit of asking for no straw before you even order a beverage. And be ready to tell your server why. If you need to use a straw, invest in a reusable silicon, metal or bamboo one!

The Action

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MY Pledge:

I will start a conversation about climate change with friends and family

The Pledge: I will start a conversation about Climate Change with friends and family

The Issue

The topic of climate change can be daunting. We know it can be tricky to chat about, but there are plenty of constructive opportunities to initiate conversation among friends and family. Start in your circle of influence with people who may be receptive to new information and suggest small changes in daily behaviour that can make big differences to our global impact. A great way to help people connect to this tricky topic is making it personal—there is growing research around how climate change impacts things we love like corals, chocolate and coffee!

Higher levels of greenhouse gases trap the heat in the Earth's atmosphere, raising the global temperature (climate change). For reefs, this means more frequent and severe pressure from heat stress, ocean acidification, and storms.

The Action

Opportunities to discuss climate change arise on an increasingly regular basis, often prompted by news and current affairs, or elements of everyday activities that have a connection to sustainable practices (for example, switching of appliances that aren't in use). These provide useful segues into conversations that allow you to engage family and friends with the concept of climate change in an area that's relevant to them. For example, coral bleaching may not seem immediately threatening to someone living in remote Queensland, but increased incidence of drought and unpredictable storms will be outcomes of climate change to which they can more easily relate. Keep the conversation light-hearted and practical, and focus on the simple, concrete actions that can be taken to increase the chances of fostering sustainable behavioural change.

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MY Pledge:

I will PiCK UP rubbish,
even if it's not mine

The Pledge: I will start a conversation about Climate Change with friends and family

The Issue

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