



■ ECO IMPACT

Top suburbs are costing the Earth

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Environment Reporter

SHOPPING has been exposed as the big culprit in rising water use and greenhouse gas emissions – and Sydney's most affluent suburbs are the worst offenders.

New data shows the electricity and water used to produce everything people buy – from food and clothing to CDs and electrical appliances – far outweighs any efforts to save water and power in the home, according to an extensive analysis by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the University of Sydney.

Wealthy families in suburbs such as Woollahra, North Sydney, Mosman and Ku-ring-gai, who can afford to install solar power and large water tanks, still have the biggest ecological footprint because of the goods and services they buy.

Shopping habits represent such a large part of greenhouse gas emissions that even if every household switched to renewable energy and stopped driving cars tomorrow, total household emissions would fall by less than 20 per cent, the study found. On

average, every additional dollar of consumption was responsible for 720 grams of greenhouse gas emissions and 28 litres of water.

Woollahra residents are rated as Sydney's worst water offenders in a suburb-by-suburb analysis based on census and Bureau of Statistics data for income and spending, combined with data about the water and energy used to produce goods and services.

Woollahra residents use, on average, 1.06 million litres of water per person each year – 66 per cent more than residents in Sydney's best-ranking water suburb, the south-west of Blacktown.

The contrast is even more striking for greenhouse gas emissions. People living in the central business district generate, on average, 130 per cent more climate change pollution than residents in Blacktown's south-west.

North Sydney, Woollahra, South Sydney and Mosman follow the CBD as the biggest emitters. Campbelltown (east), Penrith, Hawkesbury and Bankstown follow Blacktown as the lightest.

Over-consumption is, literally, costing the earth. More water is used to produce a single serve of beef than the average Sydney-

sider uses during an entire week of showers. Every \$100 spent on clothing generates 70 kilograms of greenhouse pollution.

One of the main findings of the report, *Consuming Australia*, is that the more people earn, the more they spend – so the more water they use and greenhouse gas emissions they are responsible for.

"People can make a difference to their individual contribution to greenhouse pollution by buying less, wasting less and choosing products that last," said an Australian Conservation Foundation campaigner, Chuck Berger.

People who live in the city should be able to lead more sustainable lifestyles because of access to public transport and services, and because they can afford to install energy and water efficient appliances.

"But that is almost wiped away by the wealth and consumption effect," Mr Berger said.

More than six times our average household water use is embodied in the food and other products we buy. However, at Continued Page 6



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least 8 per cent of food goes uneaten in Australia. The eco-footprint of this wasted food is greater than that of all household expenditure on transport combined, the report says.

The report says government

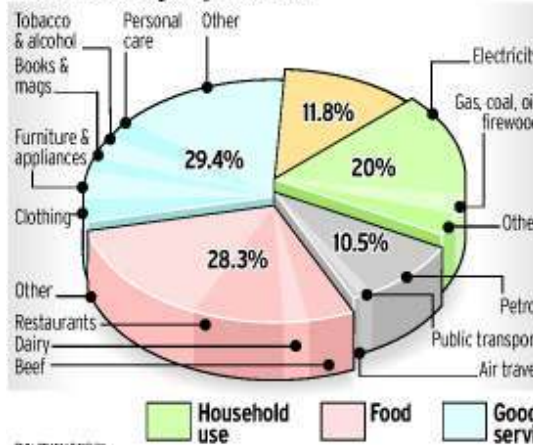
also has a role to play. Putting a price on carbon to discourage investment in polluting forms of energy, ensuring products are labelled for efficiency, and investing in public transport were some of the things government could do. "People think if they

buy green power and get public transport they are living a sustainable lifestyle," Mr Berger said. "But that is less than a third [of the impact]. We need to grapple with the other two-thirds."

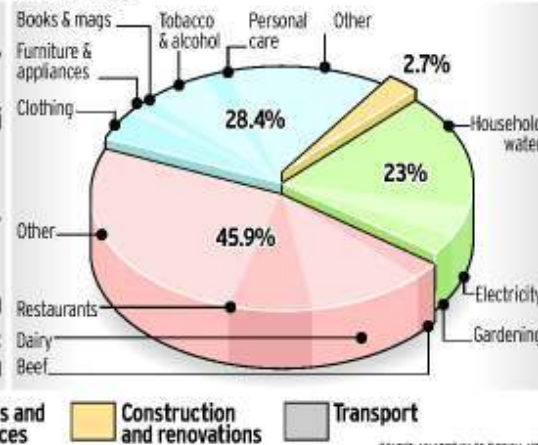
THE COST OF COMFORT



Greenhouse gas pollution



Water use



SMH GRAPHIC DESIGNS

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, AEC