

Householders' Options to Protect the Environment: Three decades of environmentalism

Written by Anna Kula, HOPE researcher Qld

Bedrock: inspired beginnings

The World Environment Day held on Sunday 5 June 1988 celebrated the theme “When People Put Environment First, Development Will Last”, what we now have come to refer to as sustainable practice. On this day Janet MacKenzie, editor and avid environmentalist, gave an informal speech in Mansfield Victoria about how ‘ordinary people can make a difference by raising awareness and initiating actions to solve local environmental problems’.

MacKenzie’s speech inspired Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE) with the slogan ‘Think Globally – Act Locally’, which went on to establish 80 branches across Victoria alone. MacKenzie established the organisation’s charter the “HOPE Generator” which supplies everyday people with information, contacts, and resources to help lessen their impact on the environment. The HOPE Generator states that “... everyone can do something, no matter how small. Maybe tomorrow they’ll do more.”

The movement inspired Frank Ondrus when he moved from Victoria to Toowoomba Queensland, establishing the HOPE Toowoomba branch in 1993.

Subsoil: work throughout the years



Figure 2 Frank Ondrus, HOPE Australia President

One of the first things implemented by Frank and his fellow volunteers at the HOPE Toowoomba branch was a weekly column in the Downs Star newspaper. The weekly column was published for eight years, offering helpful hints for households to reduce their environmental impact, which Frank believes “paved the way for HOPE’s acceptance in the community” and attracted regular volunteers. Later the article turned into a bi-monthly newsletter reaching more households across Queensland and was instrumental in helping form partnerships and promoting HOPE’s mission. Nowadays, HOPE releases its own monthly e-newsletter that is shared digitally with its members and partners across Australia.

In 2000, HOPE Victoria approached HOPE Toowoomba, which now had a website and recurring newsletter, to run HOPE nationwide. “We choose to run the national version of HOPE on a members and supporters bases, rather than branch-based,” explains Frank, as HOPE Victoria



Figure 1 Janet MacKenzie, environmentalist

became fragmented and sought a more cohesive approach. However, it wasn't until 2007 that Frank took over running HOPE on a national level, becoming President of HOPE Australia.

When asked about some of the major achievements of the last three decades Frank lists the various publications produced by HOPE. Over the years HOPE has been awarded funding to publish several information booklets, which were disseminated and made available to the public. The Ecology Audit booklet, funded by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund, was a questionnaire about sustainable living for primary school students published in 1999 with a second edition released in 2005.

Ecology Audit

How environmentally friendly are you?

A questionnaire booklet for primary school students



An initiative of

HOUSEHOLDERS' OPTIONS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT (HOPE)

HOPE published three editions of the "Householder's guide to sustainable living: Helpful hints to reduce your carbon footprint" between 2007 and 2014. The 74-page comprehensive guide provides tips on ways to be 'water wise', how to create non-toxic cleaning products, ethical eating, more eco-friendly means of transport, recycling, energy, building and renovation and gardening. The "Low Carbon Living" booklet of 2014 was granted funding by the Queensland Government. Like the "Householder's guide to sustainable living" this slightly shorter guide looks at reducing household impact in the home focusing on power, food, transport, water and waste. In 2022 "How to live sustainably and chemical-free" booklet was developed by HOPE looking at the chemicals used in our household, food and gardening as well as ways to reduce waste in our home. In 2009 HOPE has also received funding from the Queensland state government to promote energy efficiency practices in households and to start the Darling Downs Solar Neighbourhood project.

HOUSEHOLDERS GUIDE
TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING
HELPFUL HINTS TO REDUCE YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S CARBON FOOTPRINT
Prepared by: Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.



Next in the line of achievements are the numerous local events staged in Toowoomba. HOPE has held community forums at the Toowoomba City Library discussing organic gardening, maintaining regional heritage, solar, beekeeping, soil restoration, pest and weed management. HOPE has also worked with the local USQ Toowoomba Campus providing forums on environmental issues. HOPE has facilitated community events and programs with numerous other organisations, including the Toowoomba Regional Environmental Council (TREC) holding membership on the World Environment Day committee. In 2014, HOPE partnered the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee to set up Toowoomba's initial Youth Leading the World Congress.



In South-East Queensland HOPE has provided information displays at events such as National Youth Week, Logan Eco Action Festival, Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival and Toowoomba Seniors Expo to name a few.

Nationally HOPE is linked to almost 30 environmental agencies through Non-Government Organisation (NGO) partnerships and alliances (formally known as the Mutual Support Partnership) and has numerous links to government agencies, which has been an essential component in the realisation of HOPE's vision. Currently HOPE is a member group of Queensland Conversation Council (QCC), Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWaLC), Protect the Bush Alliance (PTBA) and the Darling Downs Environment Council (DDEC). HOPE is a member group of, signatory to and/or supporter of Container Deposit Scheme- Boomerang Alliance, Lock the Gate Alliance, Protect the Laws that Protect the Places You Love (PYL), GM Free Australia Alliance (GMFAA) and the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA).

How to live sustainably and chemical-free

Developed by Nina Stick



Figure 1. Organic, chemical free gardening. Source: The Essentials Store.

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www.hopeaustralia.org.au

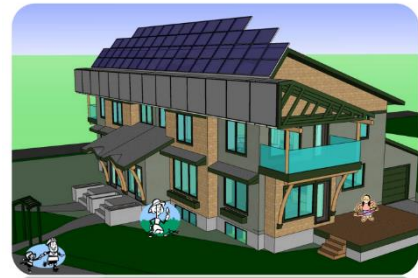
This long list of achievements has not always come easy as there have been some challenges along the way, including the inability to attract sponsorship which meant that HOPE “could not promote events effectively in order to attract good crowds” admits HOPE President. A recent issue has been the declining number of volunteers since COVID-19, a problem felt by many NGOs across Australia. At its peak HOPE had around 50 volunteers across Australia, a number which has halved in recent years.

Despite the falling numbers of active volunteers Frank believes that households are still interested in “doing the right thing” and believes the “awareness of issues and the adoption of sustainable solutions is the key to sustained change”. One practice Frank wishes more households would adopt is to be chemical free- both in the home and out in the garden.

While there are many national issues troubling our environment Frank encourages households to keep striving to live more sustainably, “there’s plenty of good useful information and advice available to make good choices”. Some can be found available on HOPE’s web page <https://www.hopeaustralia.org.au/resources/sundry-hope/>.

LOW CARBON LIVING

...starts at home





Topsoil: the future and beyond

Three decades since conception and HOPE still operates as a community-based, not-for-profit organisation offering practical solutions for households to live more sustainably. Today HOPE continues to inform and educate everyday people on current environmental issues and provide resources, workshops, meetings and practical suggestions about sustainable living with a passionate community of volunteers.

As we head into the winter months of 2023, we hope that this World Environment Day (5th June) may inspire you to shake off the winter blues and look at ways that you can change your household's carbon footprint. Check for World Environment Day activities in your areas – you could look to join an environment group to further promote environmental consciousness.



**WORLD
ENVIRONMENT
DAY**

HOPE membership is free to people from all over Australia, you can join as an individual, family, business or community organisation.

For further information about HOPE and its activities visit our website at www.hopeaustralia.org.au .

In the words of Janet MacKenzie anyone can 'think globally, act locally' to protect the future of our environment.