

Tuesday 2 August 2011

## Making you green with envy

In a bid to do its bit to cut emissions and 'save the environment', Indigo Shire Council is working hard to make Indigo Shire as green as possible.

Indigo Shire Mayor Cr Ali Pockley said that Council does what it can within the community to promote greener living. "We have a Natural Resources team who work tirelessly on new ideas and programs to increase energy efficiency and sustainability throughout the Shire. We have an Environment Advisory Committee this is made up of local experts in their collective fields, who undertake a lot of valuable work around the Shire," Cr Pockley said.

Indigo Shire is one of seven Council's taking part in the Solar North East Program, and is encouraging people to register to receive energy saving products at a cheaper rate. The program is a bulk-buy of products such as solar panels and water tanks, and provides low interest loans to people taking part to help them generate their own electricity, save money and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

"We want people to think smart about their energy use and waste. There is a lot that people can do at home to cut waste, such as composting, using green waste disposal offered by Council, worm farms and the like," Cr Pockley said.

Indigo Shire Council Waste Management Coordinator Mark Greene said that 600 houses across Indigo, Wodonga and Towong Shires are currently taking part in a trial where participants place their household organics in the green waste bin which is collected more frequently. "The temporary change encourages people to divert organic waste from landfill and reduce greenhouse gas emissions," Mr Greene said.

"At our Transfer stations in Beechworth and Rutherglen, we have scrap-metal and garden waste recycling, and have just started to recycle E-Waste such as TVs and old computers, where 90% of the parts are re-used, rather than ending up in landfill. There is a sustainable way of recycling almost anything," Mr Greene said.

Council's Planning Scheme has quite a strong push toward greener homes. "We are finding that our push is working, with more people taking on a more sustainable approach to building. This approach is helped by State and Federal Government grants and incentives to build greener houses," Cr Pockley said.

"Our Natural Resources Team run a number of projects to promote sustainability. They are developing a Sustainability Toolkit, with four publications aimed to help people build and retrofit existing homes in ways that reduce operating costs and increase their comfort levels. We run the Annual Sustainability Awards aimed at recognising and encouraging achievement in environmental sustainability throughout the Shire, and recently ran a series of free information sessions to help people understand their electricity bills better, and explore ways to reduce costs." Cr Pockley said.

Another way Council is doing its bit is by using bio-diesel in plant and equipment at the Rutherglen and Chiltern depots. Biodiesel is considered a "greener" biodegradable and nontoxic fuel option and can be

produced from a variety of feedstocks, such as virgin oil feedstock, waste vegetable oils and animal fats. The B20 biodiesel blend is sourced from the local Biodiesel Producers plant in Barnawartha.

There are many ways that you can be greener around the home.

**Some tips for greener living at home**

- Reduce greenhouse gases and save 10% off your power bill by switching off appliances such as microwaves, TVs, stereos and computers at the wall. These appliances consume large amounts of electricity even when not in use.
- If you are looking for 'greener' alternatives to a certain product and are not sure where to start, visit [www.ecobuy.org.au](http://www.ecobuy.org.au) . There is a function to search by keyword or category to help you find suppliers and products that are known to have green attributes.
- The cling wrap and aluminium foil we use to wrap lunches in contribute to the 28 million tonnes of rubbish that goes to landfill each year in Australia. Use a reusable container and make lunches litter free.
- High speed driving results in high fuel consumption. At 110 km/h your car uses up to 25% more fuel than it would if you were cruising at 90 km/h. So slow down, it's safer and cheaper.
- The lids of plastic milk, juice, soft drink and detergent bottles are not recyclable. Next time you dispose of a bottle, rinse it and put it in the recycling and the lid in the garbage.
- If you put the wrong products into your recycling bins (ie. Old clothes, the wrong plastic containers, plastic bags or dirty nappies), recyclables can no longer be sorted and large volumes of genuine recyclables may be rejected and end up at landfill.
- Don't put oils, fats or harmful chemicals down the sink - they will eventually end up in the rivers, lakes or oceans and harm our water quality and wildlife.
- Detergents with no or little phosphorus are better for the environment because phosphorus increases nutrient loads in rivers and can cause excessive algal growth and harm or kill aquatic plants and animals, as well as make waterways smelly.
- Don't use soaps or detergents in the river when camping, as this can upset the aquatic ecosystem.

For more information, or to learn more about what you can do to help, please contact Shay Simpson, Indigo Shire Council Team Leader Natural Resources on 02 6028 1100, or visit the following websites:

- [www.solarnortheast.com.au](http://www.solarnortheast.com.au)
- [www.biodieselproducers.com.au](http://www.biodieselproducers.com.au)
- [www.ecobuy.org.au](http://www.ecobuy.org.au)

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**Caption: Indigo Shire Council Environmental Projects Officer Helen Jones and Natural Resources Team Leader Shay Simpson run the Annual Sustainability Awards to recognise and encourage environmental sustainability throughout the Shire.**