



# An Insider's Guide

to Living Sustainably in Melbourne

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## **Abstract**

Trailblazing in the green movement, Melbourne is an eco-friendly hub with many resources available to those living sustainably. From local neighbourhoods to creative hubs, each plays a major part in fostering a diverse and viable green culture in the city.



## **Getting Started**

Australia has long committed to bringing innovation and sustainability into its rapidly growing infrastructure. Crusading to build towards ecological rehabilitation, social prosperity and economic viability within its communities to ensure the sustainability and wellbeing of its prospering neighbourhoods.

Melbourne continues to strengthen the country's ecological resilience through its robust network of creatives and artisanal, as well as sustainable business and recreational spaces. The local community leverages its rich resources and creative expression to promote sustainable living. Priding itself on the vibrant bustling localities that embrace and inspire sustainability, Melbourne is home to locally celebrated green restaurants, eco-friendly home and grocery outlets, and trendsetters in the conscious fashion world.

As Melbourne champions empowering local sustainability-driven artisans and small businesses in the region, we highlight some of the original concepts promoting living sustainably in this flourishing green neighbourhood.

### **About Melbourne**

Melbourne is the capital city of Victoria, and Australia's second-largest city. Focused around a central city, Greater Melbourne's area of approximately 9900 km<sup>2</sup> of suburbs spread more than 40 km to the south, 30 km to the east, 20 km to the north and sprawl across vast, flat basalt plains to the west.

The municipality of Melbourne includes metropolitan Melbourne's innermost suburbs, including the central city. Our municipality is around 37 km<sup>2</sup> and shares its borders with

seven other councils. The municipality of Melbourne is the gateway to Victoria, the seat of the Victorian Government and the headquarters of many local, national and international companies, peak bodies, and government and non-government agencies.



### **SUSTAINABILITY FOR MELBOURNE**

Melbourne is a great place to live. We're proud of our city and our international reputation as one of the most liveable cities in the world.

Part of the charm of our city is that it's constantly changing – boldly innovating and adapting to meet new needs over many decades. And climate change is no different - we've responded in a uniquely Melbourne way to this global challenge.

We need to continue to take action to ensure our city is sustainable – that Melbourne keeps its essential character and that it's resilient to the changing climate. If we don't, we risk losing what we love in our city.

Acting on climate change will take commitment from everyone – government, business, residents and visitors - but together we can achieve great things with a combination of big moves and small steps.

City of Melbourne is taking strides towards this goal with initiatives to make sure our city stays green, safe and accessible for everyone.

But we can't do it alone. We're here to help you make the all-important personal changes and make sustainable choices about transport, waste, energy, water and green spaces.

Climate change might be a global issue but the solutions are right here in our city.

#### **Energy**

City of Melbourne is proud to be part of a local and international movement of cities that will act to reduce emissions and to address climate change impacts. Last year, City of

Melbourne consulted with climate change experts and the community to develop a Climate Change Mitigation Strategy to 2050. The strategy aligns to the Paris Climate Agreement and the international effort to stay below a 1.5°C rise in global average temperatures. Climate change might be a global problem but the solutions are right here in our city.

## **Waste**

Remembering a reusable bag when doing the grocery shopping is second nature to most of us now, but there are lots of other ways to reduce single use plastics in the trolley. Consider bringing reusable produce bags, or simply buy your fruit and vegetables loose. Think twice about your favourite snacks if they come individually packaged – often skipping plastic wrapped items is better for your diet too! Many bakeries, delis and butchers have joined the #WarOnWaste so plan ahead with a shopping list and bring enough containers and a bread bag as well.

## **Heat**

Australia is already experiencing the harsh consequences of global temperatures rising. From coral bleaching, devastating droughts and unprecedented bushfires - the scientists got the facts right. Everyone enjoys sunny days but it's about to get unbearably hot. We need to work together to cool the city and prevent the future we don't want.

## **Water**

Climate change isn't just about temperature rise. Water is our life source and we have a responsibility to manage this resource to avoid the negative impacts of drought. In Melbourne we are lucky enough to have some of the world's best drinking water available straight from the tap. Yet many of us still choose to purchase plastic water bottles. It takes three litres of water to produce just one litre of bottled water. What a waste of our precious resource. As it heats up, remember your reusable bottle and choose tap water to keep you hydrated.

## **Nature**

Step outside and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits that come from being in nature. Whether you're growing your garden, reading in the park, or going for a hike, there are plenty of ways to reconnect with our beautiful environment. Revitalise yourself in the great outdoors and bring back that spring in your step.

### **I. Melbourne-A City That Cares For Its Environment**

Environmental sustainability is the basis of all Future Melbourne goals. It requires current generations to choose how they meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to be able to do the same.



The decisions made today about energy, infrastructure, buildings and transport planning will lock in the pathway to achieving the rapid decarbonisation of the municipality needed to mitigate climate change.

### **Key programs and actions**

#### ➤ **Summary for Urban Policymakers**

The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C tells us the science is clear, we have to act now. The Summary for Urban Policymakers tells us what the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C means for cities.

#### ➤ **Green our City Action Plan**

The Green Our City Strategic Action Plan is a four year plan that includes 11 actions and 4 targets aiming to improve the quality and quantity of green roofs and vertical greening in the municipality to support amenity, liveability and adapt to climate change.

#### ➤ **Open Space Strategy**

Our Open Space Strategy provides the overarching framework and strategic direction for open space planning in the City of Melbourne for the next 15 years. It includes commentary on Urban Heat Island effect mitigation and environmental improvements.

#### ➤ **Eco city forums**

These forums provide you with an opportunity to learn about our sustainability programs and what you can do at home to reduce your ecological footprint.

Join the conversation and get updates on environmental programs and events by:

- ✓ signing up for Green Leaflet, our monthly newsletter

- ✓ emailing us for further details at [ecocityforum@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:ecocityforum@melbourne.vic.gov.au).

- **CitySwitch Green Office program**

We have helped hundreds of businesses reduce their energy use and environmental impact through the CitySwitch program. We have our own CitySwitch program manager available to answer your questions and come out and help you measure, plan, implement and monitor your impact and actions, free of charge.

- **Nature in the City Strategy**

This is the City of Melbourne's first strategy to create and maintain healthy ecosystems and thriving biodiversity within the city. By considering our city as a wider ecosystem, we'll create opportunities for connections between people, plants, animals and the landscape.

- **Urban Forest Strategy**

We are planting diverse tree species to create a healthier and cooler landscape, with the aim of doubling the city's tree canopy by 2040.

- **New technologies**

We are trialling cool roofs, green roofs, walls and facades, and providing technical guidelines to property owners.

- **Green transport**

The City of Melbourne has an extensive network of public transport and dedicated bike lanes. Swanston Street, the city's main street, is closed to car traffic.

- **Water management**

Visit Urban Water to discover how we are creating a sustainable water system for the city. Explore current projects and read Municipal Integrated Water Management Plan, our four-year plan for integrated water cycle management.

- **Solar program**

Our solar program provides information and assistance on installing rooftop solar panels for residents and businesses.

- **1200 Buildings**

Our 1200 Buildings program helps commercial building owners retrofit their properties with modern energy-efficient technologies.

If 1200 buildings improved their energy efficiency, the greenhouse gas savings would help achieve the city's carbon neutral goal.

- **Climate Change Mitigation strategy**



To reduce the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the municipality, we have developed the Climate Change Mitigation Strategy for 2050 (PDF 8.1 MB) .

➤ **Climate change adaptation**

We have undertaken research and implemented actions to better understand and prepare for the local impacts of climate change.

➤ **Waste management**

Our Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy guides the way the city collects and processes waste, while encouraging a decrease in waste production.

➤ **Emissions Reduction Plan**

The City of Melbourne is now using science-based climate targets to reduce our organisation's carbon emissions by 4.5 per cent each year, as explained in our Emissions Reduction Plan.

***An Inside Look at Living in One of the World's Most Sustainable Cities — Melbourne, Australia***

Melbourne is a sprawling network of neighborhoods, trams, trains, bikes, laneways and, around almost every corner, coffee shops — a bit like Portland, Oregon but bigger, more European feeling and with giant bats. There are tall skyscrapers, Robert Moses-era public housing blocks, dense row houses, overgrown bungalows and suburban complexes.



Over 15 years ago, Melbourne mounted a long-term campaign to change the way it uses energy and has attracted international acclaim for its commitment to sustainability. This has included encouraging bike riding and public transport and improving building efficiency. One notable example of this is the Council House 2 building, Australia's first six-

star green star new office design building. Completed in 2006, some of the building's features include recycled water use, automatic windows, sun-tracking facades for shade and roof-mounted wind turbines to draw out hot air.

While good public transport and efficient office buildings are a big part of being a sustainable city, residences — and the way people live in those residences — are likely just as important. Melbourne is only as sustainable as its Melbournians.

A person's carbon footprint, or energy economy, is some combination where they live and how they live. Two forward-thinking approaches to this idea in Melbourne are the 5×4 House, a soon-to-be-built super energy efficient, zero carbon dwelling on a 5×4-meter plot of land, and the Murundaka Co-housing Community, a new eco-housing complex of 20 residences based on the principles of sustainable and community living.

### ***Sustainability doing really well in Melbourne's inner suburbs***

Cranbourne is an outer suburb of Melbourne, located 43 km south-east of the CBD. It is home to the modern-age racecourse, top-rated primary and secondary schools, healthcare centres, cafes and restaurants. The suburb is a short drive from the Mornington Peninsula, Western Port Bay and other coastal attractions.

<https://www.bondcleaninginmelbourne.com.au/end-of-lease-cleaning-cranbourne/>

*According to the developer group, which includes the project architects, sustainability is usually a talking point in "that part of town".*

## **II. How to Go Green: The Top 15 Most Important Sustainable Steps**

So, here's where you'll find everything from beginner (quitting the bottled water habit) to advanced (working toward a zero waste or low waste home) plus the 15 most important steps for creating less waste and using fewer resources.





## 🌈 WHY IS GOING GREEN IMPORTANT?

Sometimes it's disheartening to look at the state of our planet. And it's hard to know if our individual changes are making a difference. But the truth is that every positive action has a positive impact.



Embracing a low-waste lifestyle is important for many reasons. The obvious benefit is that it leads to less pollution and fewer resources used. But there are many other benefits like saving time and money, encouraging healthier eating, avoiding exposure to toxins, and challenging ourselves to be more resourceful.

It also sets a great example for your child.

You do your best to live lightly on the planet. You're kind to Mother Nature and are grateful and careful with her resources. And you give your child plenty of opportunities to get outside and fall in love with their natural surroundings.

After all – we protect what we love.

## 🌈 HOW TO GO GREEN – 15 WAYS TO REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Going green means different things to different people. While some can completely embrace the zero-waste movement, it might feel unattainable or stressful to others. Our team discusses green guilt often, and we feel most balanced with a low-waste (rather than zero-waste) lifestyle.

We certainly make conscious decisions and choose to support companies that are ethical and sustainable. But we don't stress out over the occasional fast food wrapper or the fact

that our kids love LEGOs (though we're pretty excited for their transition into plant-based bricks).

Here are some beginner, intermediate, and advanced green choices you can make in your home. Choose a few of these steps and add them to your green routine this year.



## **REDUCE**

Of the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) this one is the most important.

You might think you're not contributing to ocean trash because you'd never litter at the beach, but have you looked at what's floating around out there? It's not just plastic bottles, toy beach shovels, and grocery bags. There are also laundry detergent bottles, balloons, large yogurt containers, and milk jugs.

Those thousands of items most likely fell off a barge on their way to China to be recycled. And who knows how long they've been there, because China recently stopped accepting our recycling. Placing an item in your recycling bin is no guarantee it actually gets recycled.

Reducing – or swapping your disposables for reusables – what you consume overall is the best solution. You'll see echos of this in all of the tips below.

### **STOP BUYING BOTTLED WATER**

Avoiding plastic water bottles isn't hard. In fact, humans did it for our entire existence up until the last few decades. All you have to do is drink water (filtered if you prefer) from a glass at home and keep a reusable bottle for when you're on the go.

Even in many emergency situations, you don't need to buy cases of plastic water bottles. Part of our team is in Florida, and during hurricane season we know our Big Berkey water filter is capable of filtering rain water, pool water, or water we've run in the bath tubs, buckets, pitchers, etc. prior to the storm.

### **BRING YOUR OWN REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS**

This tip is near the top of every list, because it makes a HUGE impact. Billions of plastic bags are used each year around the world. Plastic bags start out as fossil fuels and end up as deadly waste in landfills and the ocean. Birds often mistake shredded plastic bags for food, filling their stomachs with toxic debris.

For a hungry sea turtle, it's nearly impossible to distinguish between a jellyfish and a floating plastic bag. Fish eat thousands of tons of plastic a year, transferring it up the food chain to bigger fish and marine mammals.

Reusable bags are often handed out at events or fundraisers. Sometimes they come with items you buy. You can probably create a collection of them without spending any money.

### **MAKE OTHER SIMPLE SUSTAINABLE SWAPS**

While plastic water bottles and grocery bags are the biggest offenders, there are other swaps that make a huge difference. Every room in your home has opportunities to stop using disposables and switch to reusables.

**Straws** – Whether at home or when you're ordering a drink at a restaurant, plastic straws are an unnecessary single-use item. Do without, or buy a set of glass or stainless steel for home and use the carrying case for travel.

**Coffee or tea cups** – Some paper coffee cups have plastic lining and most have plastic lids. We've been using the Joco glass cups with silicone lids and sleeves for about 6 years now. Most restaurants will refill them without any issues, but it's cheaper (and usually healthier) to make your own coffee or tea at home.

**Coffee pods** – There are enough of these in landfills to circle the globe numerous times. Even the creator of the k-cup regrets their environmental impact (source). If you still use a Keurig, get a reusable stainless steel pod replacement. Or make your coffee the old-fashioned way and use an organic hemp coffee filter or with a Chemex pour over coffeemaker and your tea on the stovetop with a safe kettle.

**Cleaning products** – The conventional home's collection of cleaning products is expensive, takes up a lot of space, and can have some serious health implications for a child's



developing body. Don't throw them out, but once you've used them, save the bottles and make your own cleaners.



**Soap & shampoo** – Switching from bottles of body wash to bar soap is easy and affordable. Do it and don't look back. Switching from bottled shampoo to shampoo bars might feel scary but it's not so bad. We've had good luck with Lush (they do have a foaming agent) and Ethique shampoo and conditioner bars which can now be found at Target.

**Paper towels & napkins** – Swap disposable versions of these for cloth napkins (buy them affordably or used or make your own) and un-paper towels.

**Toothpaste** – You can go plastic-free with your oral care items by choosing tooth tabs (packaged in cardboard or glass) or dental lace instead of floss. If you use mouthwash, make your own and store it in a mason jar or glass bottle. And of course, start using bamboo toothbrushes instead of plastic.

**Diapers** – Conventional diapers will sit in landfills for up to 5 generations. While some “natural” diapers may be better for baby's skin than plastic, they're no easier on the environment. Cloth is definitely the greenest choice. You can find out more about how to get started with cloth diapers [here](#) and the basics of how to use cloth diapers [here](#).

✚ **CHOOSE CARDBOARD OVER PLASTIC WHEN POSSIBLE**

Generally speaking, it's easier to recycle cardboard than plastic. Plus paper products tend to break down more easily without adding a lot of weight to the product the way glass or aluminum can.

When you have the choice, pick pasta in the box instead of pasta in a bag, or laundry detergent in a box instead of the bottle. Even better – check for companies that source their cardboard sustainably or take a strong stance on deforestation.

### **III. What Is Green Cleaning & Why You Should Kick Toxic Cleaners To The Curb!**

The term "green cleaning" can have a lot of definitions, but the main goal of the process is to use cleaning solutions and methods that keep us and our environment healthy and free of toxins. Exposure to chemicals and toxins can potentially cause irreparable damage to our bodies, water, air, and ecosystem. Green cleaning can fall mean using a green cleaning product or cleaning your home in a way that reduces waste that goes into landfills, for example.



#### **✚ What Is Green Cleaning?**

For some, green cleaning means that they only use substances like baking soda, vinegar, and lemons to clean the home surfaces. These are considered to be natural green cleaners. Some households may seek out manufactured green cleaning products that are healthy for the environment (some are green brands). Green cleaning products typically have the following characteristics:

- No phosphates
- No chlorine
- No artificial fragrances
- No artificial colors
- Biodegradable or recyclable packaging
- Organically grown ingredients using sustainable farming practices



Some green cleaning products may certify that their items are fair trade, meaning that the product meets certain environmental and labor standards by those who produced it. Other green cleaning products may not be free of additives or harmful chemicals—but they may donate a portion of their profits to environmental causes.

### 🌱 How "Green" Are Green Cleaners?

To tell if a product is green, read the label. Not that different labeling programs classify cleaning products. The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Design for the Environment program mandates that labels are put on products that meet EPA's criteria for chemicals. These products display the Design for the Environment (DfE) label. Others that are labeled as "low VOC" or "no VOC" means they have a lower concentration of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or none at all.



In recent years, there has been quite a bit of debate about the differences between green and traditional cleaners. There are three gray areas when it comes to comparing green and traditional cleaners:

- Labels with vague terms such as "environmentally friendly" and "non-toxic" are not regulated and potentially misleading which means that some green products may still have unhealthy ingredients in them.
- When it comes to effectively killing germs and stopping the spread of infection, for example, it is vital to have a product that cleans and disinfects. However, some people who turn to the EPA-registered disinfectant list, for example, may be wary of some green cleaners not on the list, and instead stick to trusted favorites such as bleach.
- Green cleaning items have also faced a backlash because they can cost more than traditional cleaning products.

The American Cleaning Institute is vocal when it comes to educating people about which chemicals are in cleaning agents—and other groups have come out stating which substances to avoid. The EPA also keeps an easily accessible database of greener cleaning products in its Safer Choice program.

Whatever choices you make about your cleaning supplies and practices, there is a huge variety of environmentally friendly choices for green cleaning. This can also include steam cleaners, which do not rely on the use of any chemicals whatsoever to clean and sanitize surfaces. With a little research, you may be able to green up your household cleaning routine to create a healthier, safer environment.

### ✚ **The Benefits of Switching to All Green Cleaning Products**

So, now we know what green cleaning is and why it's so important, let's talk about the real benefits of switching to an all-green cleaning routine... And trust me when I say there are a ton of benefits!



### **Health Benefits**

Harsh, chemical-laced, household cleaners have a big impact on our health. It may not seem that way as we aren't directly ingesting it, but with every spray, you are getting exposed to poisons via inhalation and contact with your skin that is then absorbed into your body.

By choosing to switch to eco cleaning products you are...

- ✓ Reducing yourself and your loved ones' exposure to harsh chemicals
- ✓ Eliminating leftover, toxic surface residue from traditional cleaners that can be easily absorbed by your skin
- ✓ Improving air quality in your home with fewer chemical gases in the air

- ✓ Reduce the risk of chemical burns to the skin or eyes (though even non-toxic cleaners can irritate the eyes and skin so be sure to test your products)
- ✓ Eco cleaners effectively reduce the amount of dust and chemical allergens in the environment, reducing respiratory issues like asthma and reducing common issues like headaches, and even sneezing!

Taking back control, and making informed decisions about the products we're using as we have a better knowledge of the ingredients.

### **Environmental Benefits**

If the health benefits of switching weren't enough, the added environmental benefits are sure to have you second-guessing your go-to cleaner.

For some, it's hard to believe that a small bottle of liquid can impact our planet, but it does. And one small bottle turns into millions, billions of gallons when you look at it on a larger scale with widespread use.

While you can't do anything about everyone else you can do something about yourself and when you do you can feel good that your carbon footprint is helping to...

- ✓ Minimize your impact on Ozone depletion as well as your impact on global climate change
- ✓ Reduce pollution from runoff into our water and soil (which then goes into the food chain)
- ✓ Reduces chemical pollution in our air
- ✓ Reuse containers with peace of mind that chemicals aren't still inside, which results in less waste being sent to landfills
- ✓ Know that the cleaners you are using are biodegradable and eco-friendly
- ✓ You are helping preserve our wild animal populations and keeping harmful substances out of the ocean

***Switching to Green Cleaning is not only good for health & the Environment it is easy on your wallet***

### **Bottom Line**

Embracing sustainability in Melbourne isn't just a choice; it's a way of life that fosters harmony with the environment and enhances the well-being of its residents. Through this insider's guide, we've uncovered a myriad of strategies and resources available to individuals seeking to live more sustainably in this vibrant city. From adopting eco-conscious habits in daily routines to engaging with local initiatives and businesses committed to environmental stewardship, Melburnians have the opportunity to make a positive impact on their community and the planet. By prioritizing sustainability, we not only safeguard the natural beauty and resources of Melbourne but also contribute to a brighter, greener future for generations to come. So let's continue to explore, innovate, and collaborate, transforming our city into a beacon of sustainability for the world to emulate.

Together, we can make Melbourne a shining example of responsible living and environmental harmony.

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