

What were you doing on Saturday 19th March from 8:30pm – 9:30pm? Playing some games by the light of a candle, star gazing, having an unplugged jam session or finding your own way of celebrating Earth Hour?

Earth Hour is a global event held annually to encourage businesses and households to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour. Earth hour is a symbolic hour organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) about our commitment to the planet. The event started in Sydney in 2007 and since then has grown to encompass 172 countries and territories, and over 7,000 cities and towns worldwide (*Earth Hour Report, 2015*).

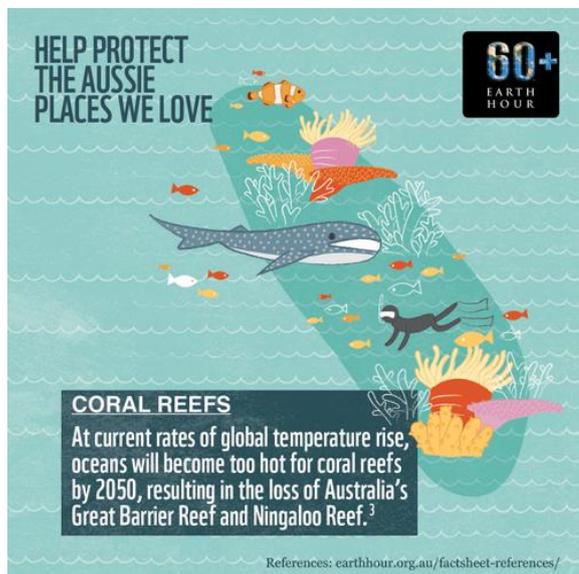
The theme of this year's Earth Hour was “*Switch off for the Places We Love in 2016*” and encouraged individuals to think about what we may lose if the world continues on the current path (*Earth Hour (1), 2016*) for example:

- “85% of Australians live within 50km of the coastline. At the current rate of global warming sea levels may rise by almost half a metre by 2100, increasing the risk of coastal flooding of cities and beaches”.
- “If temperatures rise by 2.9°C above pre-industrial levels, by 2050 the frequency of ‘very high’ fire danger days would increase by 20-100% and extreme fire danger days would increase by 100-300%”

The organisers of Earth Hour have provided some handy hints to minimise your impact on the environment which are summarised below (*Earth Hour (2), 2016*):

- 1) **Consider your products before purchase** – Are you and your business buying products that are sustainably sourced? For example buying sustainably sourced seafood or paper with high recycled content. What steps can you take to improve your purchasing patterns? Buying Australian made products reduces food miles (distance a product has to travel), which in turn reduces the consumption of energy and release of emissions whilst supporting the local economy (*NRDC, 2007*).
- 2) **Use less energy** – Not only is this helpful to the environment as most of Australia’s energy comes from burning fossil fuels (*Origin Energy, 2016*), but it will also reduce your energy bill. Turn off products that aren’t in use and ensure that when buying new appliances they are as energy efficient as possible.
- 3) **Consider using renewable energy** – Join the thousands of businesses that have installed solar panels on their roofs or asked their service provider for a greater percentage of their energy consumption to be renewably sourced.
- 4) **Use less and recycle more** – Introduce recycling and remove some waste bins, promote car pool arrangements to use less petrol and only buy the food you will eat.
- 5) **Start a conversation** – Talk with friends, family and colleagues about how we can reduce our footprint and be a part of the solution. Social power can positively impact political decisions so voice your opinions to help make a change!

Remember the purpose of Earth Hour is to raise awareness and “*to shine a light on climate action and making Earth a better home for current and future generations*” (*Earth Hour Report , 2015*). Support the 2016 Earth Hour theme (places we love) by getting out into the environment to the places you love and sharing your experiences with others.



References

- Earth Hour Report, 2015, Earth Hour 2015 Report, [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.earthhour.org/sites/default/files/Earth-Hour-2015-Global-Stats-Report.pdf>
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- Earth Hour 2, 2016, A guide to reducing Australia's environmental footprint, [ONLINE] Available at: https://earthhour.org.au/content/images/pdf/Business/EarthHour_HandyHints_Business.pdf
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- Origin Energy, 2016, ENERGY IN AUSTRALIA, [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.originenergy.com.au/blog/about-energy/energy-in-australia.html>

Images

- Earth Hour (4), 2016, factsheet references, [ONLINE] Available at: <http://earthhour.org.au/resources/>