

COVER STORY

weekender.

A BETTER LIFE,
STEP BY STEP

LISA CUGNETTO talks to Novocastrians about small, everyday ways they choose to live more sustainably.

IF LIVING more sustainably is something you've been wanting to focus on - but you haven't been sure where to start - making small changes can help you to reduce your footprint and live a greener life.

Sustainability became important to Beth Peach-Steer, an actress/singer, and her husband, Sam, an emergency doctor, when they moved from London to Newcastle about five years ago and started a family.

"When you have kids, you think, what kind of world do we want our children to grow up in? What kind of family environment do we want our children to grow up in?" says Peach-Steer, a mum of two.

"To keep our planet spinning for as long as possible, we need to all try and make the best, most sustainable choices that we can."

For Lee Illfield, a self-employed photographer and mother of two boys, "sustainability is a respectful, considerate way of living".

"Holistically, it embraces the welfare of everything - from people's mental health right through to the environment," she says. "I think it's the only way to find a balance in life and is relevant to the present and the future."

Fellow Tighes Hill local Adrian Garner shares Illfield's passion for sustainability.

"I did a carbon footprint calculator after graduating from high school and found out that we would need three earths if everyone lived the way that I do. That was because I had my *first* mobile phone, a laptop, and a car," he says.

"So, I think if we want to be fair to the other humans on the planet, we need to steer our lifestyles towards something that will still work if everyone on the planet did the same thing."

Friends Illfield and Garner run the Smokva Community Garden at the Croatian Club

in Wickham, established the Buy Nothing Newcastle (Inner West) group together, and are involved with organic produce not-for-profit Beanstalk Organic Co-op in Mayfield.

These are just a few of the Newcastle-based initiatives and organisations helping locals live better and more sustainably.

Buy less, give more

Facebook Marketplace and Buy, Swap and Sell Groups, Gumtree, and Freecycle (which has a Newcastle instalment) are good places to start when it comes to giving and finding free goods.

The Buy Nothing project - a global network of volunteer-run local gift economy communities which operate on Facebook - takes this one step further and makes it a local effort.

"I hate the idea of waste, of things that have value going to landfill. I had heaps of stuff at my house. Most of my family and friends know that I like to be resourceful with items before throwing them out so often 'gift' me things to take care of," says Illfield on how she came to establish Buy Nothing Newcastle (Inner West)

with Garner.

The Buy Nothing Newcastle (Inner West) group has more than 800 members. Garner says the response has been "amazing".

"We are constantly running into people in the street who tell us stories of all the neat things they have scored, and the new friends they got them from," Garner says. "Everyone gets the concept really quickly; as an admin, we haven't had to deal with any drama at all. People being kind on the internet, who would have thought?"

Meanwhile, putting a new spin on donating items to charities is Australian not-for-profit online marketplace charityBay where people can sell new or used items and donate some (or all) of the sales to their chosen charities. Newcastle-based registered not-for-profits featured on charityBay include Nova for Women and Children, Hunter Gender Alliance, and Community Disability Alliance Hunter.

Become a borrower

From bikes and books to toys, tools, and frocks - you'll be surprised what you can borrow instead of buy locally.