



THE TRANSITION TOWN MOVEMENT

TRANSITION TOWNS

Our homes, neighbours and towns create the core sense of our belonging, close relationships and connection. It is also where we can plant seeds of change and defeat global problems like climate change. The transition movement, also known as transition towns ties these together and helps us to ‘think globally and act locally’¹. It builds bridges for connection in our local towns and helps solve big social problems. The movement started in Totnes in the UK in 2006 and is now international. The core idea behind the movement is to develop towns that are sustainable, resilient and better prepared for future challenges². This article will explore which problems it solves, how you can create a transition movement and take you through two inspiring stories of communities that have created their very own transition towns.

URGENT SOCIETAL PROBLEMS

The Transition Town movement helps address two core problems we are facing today:

CLIMATE CHANGE – This can be defined as long-term fluctuations in the climate which according to

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is caused by increases in human greenhouse gases¹. This has many effects such as melting ice sheets, increases in temperatures and warming oceans.

PEAK OIL- We have a finite supply of oil which eventually will reach a stage called peak oil where its production is maximised¹. According to various views, this may or may not have already happened¹. As a result, we need to replace peak oil use with more alternative carbon-friendly sources of fuel.

BUILDINGS IN CHINA COVERED IN THICK SMOG

Transition town movements solve these problems because they are versatile and flexible enough to meet the community needs whilst solving global problems. For example, part of a transition movement could be to create a community garden¹. This reduces the need for supply chain vehicles that consume fossil fuels to transport fruit and veggies to supermarket giants

like Coles. At the same time, it reduces excess consumption, fosters community connection and builds skills in horticulture and growing produce.

HOUSEHOLDERS' OPTIONS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE) first heard about transition towns in the mid-2000s and the movement has since involved all sorts of communities, citizens, councils and schools.

HOPE has always been committed to achieving goals relating to the transition town movement. From using less energy and resources to switching to renewable, natural and locally produced products³.

HOPE continues to create a powerful voice that inspires sustainable lifestyles based on less waste and consumption and takes action towards combatting big issues like climate change and fossil fuel use³.



BELLINGEN RIVER FESTIVAL

BELLINGEN



Bellingen is a picturesque and charming town situated in NSW near a world-heritage rainforest and various rivers and waterfalls⁴. Bellingen first took on the transition town movement in 2008 creating a vision to achieve their transition via the 3 R's⁵.

1 Re-Localising

They are re-localising the production of food, energy and other resources. For example by operating a free market where anyone can give or take a product for free⁵.

2 Re-Learning

They have established the centre for ecological learning where they regularly hold re-skilling workshops that allow anyone the opportunity to learn skills the community needs such as beekeeping⁵.

3 Re-Connecting

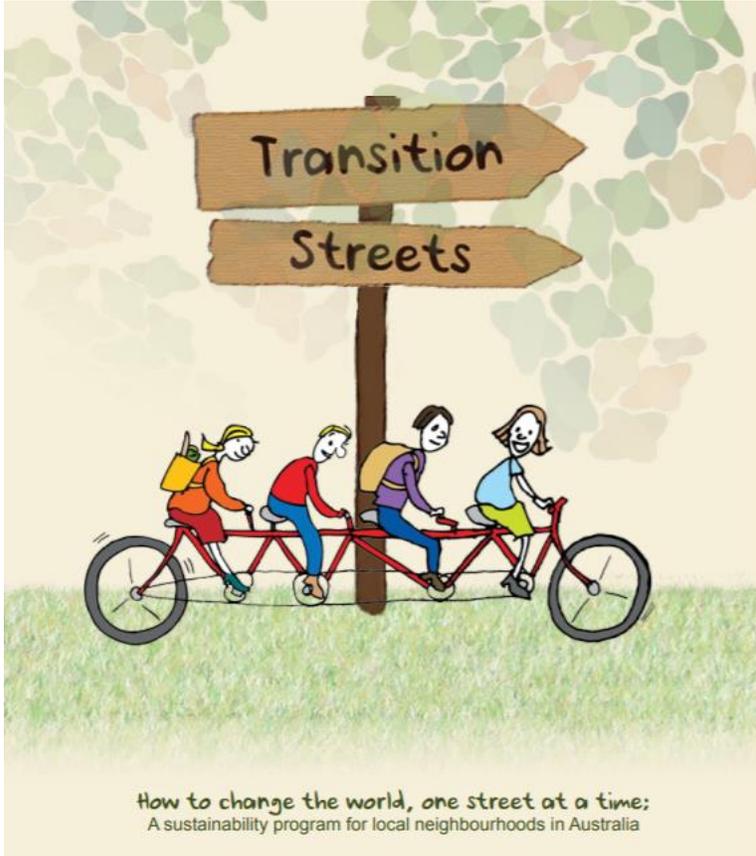
The yearly Bellingen River Festival gets the whole community together by the river where they enjoy celebrations and high community spirits⁵.

NEWCASTLE

Another vibrant city which is transforming the streets into a transition town is Newcastle, NSW. Newcastle is a beautiful harbour city with an abundance of scenic beaches and coastal nature. They have achieved a tremendous transition town transformation through



their concept of transition streets where ‘neighbours get together and try to be more energy and water efficient’⁶. To create these transition streets they have developed an incredibly informative resource called the transition street workbook which is full of many practical exercises and activities that take neighborhoods to the next level of sustainability⁷. Some snapshot areas include:



Water

Australia is one of the driest yet highest water consumption regions in the world!

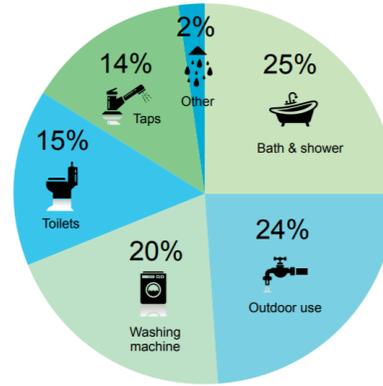
We urgently need to move towards more sustainable water solutions. Part of this solution will involve saving households water as much as possible. This will not only benefit the environment but also your household costs by lowering your water usage and energy bill costs⁷.

The transition workbook shows you how through the following steps:

1. How much water are you currently using⁷?

	Usage period	Average daily usage (kL)	Average daily usage (litres)
Bill 1			

2. How much water is each household item using⁷?



3. Create action plans to save water in areas like your bathroom and laundry⁷.

My laundry action plan	Will do	Have Done	/ N/A
\$\$\$ Buy water-efficient washing machine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FREE Become familiar with efficient cycle options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Food

Another area touched on by the workbook is food. We all love to indulge in dining and cooking hearty and nutritious meals. The root of food consumption and production comes from our purchase decisions. However, given the shift from local and farmer market shopping to mass-scale supermarkets, there has been a huge environmental, economic and social cost⁷.



Environmental costs

The oil-based fuels used to grow mass-scale food in supermarkets is creating carbon emissions that are contributing to climate change⁷.

Social costs

To support mass-scale production there is an increase in synthetic herbicides and pesticides to grow produce that is leading to detrimental impacts on our health⁷. For example, acute effects like blindness, nausea and rashes.

Economic Costs

The vast increase in consumption and production is a vicious cycle. It is leading to devastating damage to natural habitats through increases in non-biodegradable packing and shockingly profound levels of food waste⁷.

The workbook challenges us to resolve all these problems giving a range of ideas to get you going such as:

- Referring to www.amc.org to reduce consumption of unsustainable fish⁷.
- Which fruits and vegetables contain the most artificial pesticides and herbicides⁷?
- Investing in organic food to save your health⁷.
- How you can start growing your food to reduce your carbon footprint⁷.

These are just a few examples, with other areas including energy and transport. They also give great challenges, community opportunities and ways to involve children in the process towards building your sustainable transition town.

Taking it street by street, they are gradually building a more sustainable town with a great sense of community connection through extra special events like street parties and film nights.

CREATING A TRANSITION MOVEMENT

- 1 Creating an A-Star team made up of community members that can drive the Transition Movement into action¹.
- 2 Promote understanding about core problems transition towns help to solve through documentaries and talks¹.
- 3 Creating an energy descent action plan that includes your vision and goals and how you will switch to more sustainable living¹.
- 4 Create a grand launch event such as a community fair or gala that helps community members become aware of the communities goal in becoming a transition town¹.

SUMMARY



We can take inspiration from small towns like Bellingham and Newcastle to help grow transition towns in our communities. Writing to your local city council about the transition movement and the steps you can take to become one is a great way to start. Creating a vision like Bellingham can help your community picture what, when and how it can be more sustainable. Finally, using fantastic resources and networks such as H.O.P.E and the transition street workbook can help plan your movement towards sustainability. You can read more about the transition movement at <https://transitionnetwork.org/about-the-movement/> which has links to other incredible stories of towns transitioning as well as a great source of inspiration. for further ideas.

REFERENCES

1 Transition Town Brochure HOPE, May 2011

2 <http://earthwiseharmony.com/CONNECT/EH-Transition-Towns-Australia.html>

3 HOPE Charter

4 <https://www.bellingen.nsw.gov.au/recreation/tourism>

5 <http://www.cel.org.au/transition-bellingen/>

6 <http://transitionnewcastle.org.au/transition-streets/>

7 <http://transitionnewcastle.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Transition-Streets-National-March-2015-condensed.pdf>

Cover Picture

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/takeaway/segments/creating-sustainable-energy-island>

Bellingen Festival Picture

<https://www.facebook.com/bellingenriverfestival/>

Valley Picture <https://www.traveller.com.au/a-festival-for-all-occasions-1c6hm>

China Buildings in Smog Picture

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/chinese-media-silver-linings-smog-haze>

Food Waste Statistics Picture

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/australia-reduced-food-waste-by-700-million/>