What practical stuff can I do today to live sustainably and help our planet?

Sustainability Victoria (www.sustainability.vic.gov.au) says a few simple changes will make a big difference to your environmental footprint and increase the health of the planet, yourself, your family your school and our wildlife. **Can you do these simple things below**? Circle **YES or NO** to 12 questions. What was your score?

1. Don't waste food. Recycle food into the garden for plants to grow, compost your school lunch waste. The average Victorian household throws out $2,200 worth of food each year? **YES? NO?**

2. Reduce litter. Pick up litter from the gutter before it kills our river and sea life. Use recycle bins. Buy from markets or places where stuff isn't wrapped in plastic. Use your own bag when shopping. Help clean up schools and Australia. **YES? NO?**

3. Use a reusable water bottle or cup. Melbourne has some of the world's best drinking water. Yet 373 million plastic water bottles end as waste each year and produce 60,000 tons of greenhouses gases a year in Australia. It takes 3-7 litres of water and one litre of oil to produce one litre of bottled water. And Australians throw out 2,700,000 disposable paper coffee cups every day. **YES? NO?**

4. Save water. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or washing your hands. Soak your dishes in warm water first. Put a bucket in your shower or sink and put it back in the garden. Put cooking water in gardens**.** Get a free showerhead to reduce water 40%. Shower shorter. Grow Aussie water-tolerant plants. **YES? NO?**

5. Use less heating. E.g. 18-20 degrees and wear more clothes. Every degree hotter means more climate change, and increases your heating bill 10%. Turn off unused lights and appliances. **YES? NO?**

6. **Say 'no thanks' to straws and plastic bags**. Australians use 10 million plastic bags every day, contributing to 8 million tonnes of plastic dumped into the ocean every year. Plastic straws are one of the worst contributors. Use your own bag when shopping. **YES? NO?**

7. Shop locally, buy Australian and Victorian-made stuff. Much less carbon fuel has been used to transport local goods. **YES? NO?**

8. Walk, bike and use public transport when possible. It reduces carbon emissions, is good for the environment plus your health. Melbourne trams are now powered from a solar power station. **YES? NO?**

9. Improve your school. Get your school to join the free **ResourceSmart Schools Program** offered by Sustainability Victoria. Recycle litter, change lighting, grow food, recycle lunch waste, remove plastics etc. **YES? NO?**

10. Support an environmental group or start your own e.g. Clean up Australia, Yarra Riverkeepers, Thirst, Aust Conservation Foundation, Aust Koala Foundation, Aust Student Environment Network, Aust Youth Climate Coalition, Aust Wildlife Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia, Birds Australia, Kids for Tigers or many, many others. Every contribution helps! **YES? NO?**

11. Plant trees, shrubs, grasses, food plants in your school, home, nature strip. It cools us down, sucks in carbon, breathes oxygen and moisture and saves wildlife. **YES? NO?**

12. **Use recycle paper** including school exercise books and toilet paper. Pass on last year's notes and books to a new student.