



## Headlines

- » Climate change and energy issues **jumped in importance** from 2003 in a range of questions.
- » Respondents identified climate change and energy issues as the **4th and 5th most important environmental issues** respectively.
- » Energy/greenhouse/climate change measures were **nominated by 8% of people as the most important environmental initiative** for the NSW government.
- » **Less than half (41%) correctly answered a question about the causes of climate change** but community awareness in this area has been increasing steadily since 1994.
- » There was **strong support** (81% agree) that **more money should be spent on education campaigns** about solutions to global warming.
- » **Far fewer people were positive about our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** in 2006 than in previous surveys (a 12% drop since 2003).
- » Those **reducing fuel consumption** on a regular basis **increased by 10%** (from 38% to 48%) from 2003.
- » **Younger people** (aged 15–24) were **less likely to act** to reduce their energy consumption than older age groups,

*"It's not ever cold anymore. It used to be freezing, you used to walk out and see frost on the ground. I haven't seen a frost for years."*

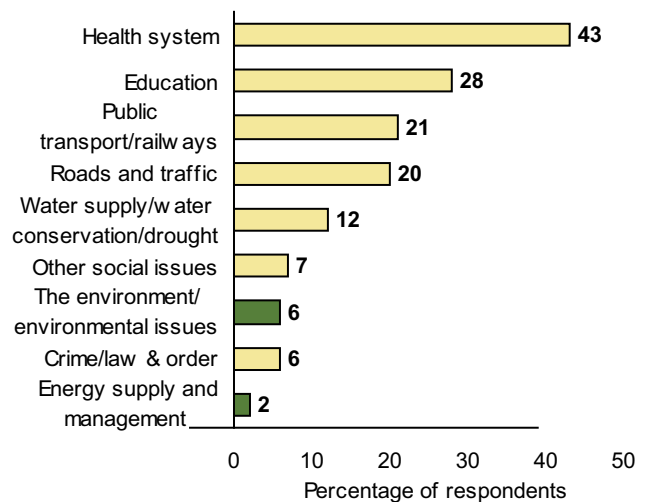
*Female, 35, Inner city*

## Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?

- Contains the results of two telephone surveys with a representative sample of 1721 people from across NSW
- Includes analysis of demographic differences with all questions
- Includes findings from focus group discussions about people's views of the environment and their own environmental activities

## Priority issues for the NSW Government now...

Compared to other issues, the environment ranked 7th as a current priority and energy issues ranked 13th. 56% of those mentioning energy in this question nominated energy or climate change as an environmental issue in a later question and were thus likely to be making the link between energy and climate change.



Energy supply and management issues were more likely to be nominated by people in Sydney; those aged between 20–24, and those with children as one of the most important issues for NSW government action today<sup>1</sup>.

## ...and in the future

People were also asked what they thought would be priorities for the NSW Government in ten years time.

As a future issue, energy doubled from 2003 to 4% of survey respondents. 50% of those mentioning energy in this question nominated energy or climate change as an environmental issue in a later question and were thus also likely to be making the link between energy and climate change.

<sup>1</sup> Only those groups between which differences are statistically significant are reported throughout this fact sheet



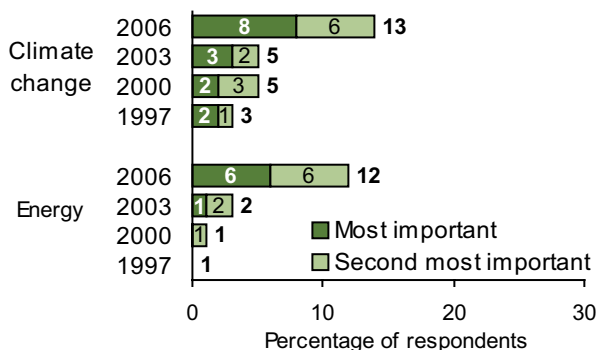
### The most important environmental issues

Energy and climate change both increased dramatically from 2003 as one of respondents' two most important environmental issues. Energy increased from 2% to 12% and climate change from 5% to 13%.

Two most important environmental issues	%
Water conservation & management/drought	57
Air pollution/air quality	20
Forest/bushland/ biodiversity issues	16
<b>Climate change</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Energy</b>	<b>12</b>
Water pollution/water quality	11
Other pollution	10
Waste	8
Development and planning	7
Land degradation/ soil/ erosion/ salinity etc	4

'Energy' issues included energy conservation or management (7%) and nuclear power (5%). Nuclear power responses were mainly acknowledging that it is an issue for community and government debate, fewer expressed positions for or against this form of energy.

#### Climate change and energy as the most important environmental issues



People with post-secondary qualifications were more likely to state that the greenhouse effect/global warming is the key environmental issue in NSW today (15–16% compared to 11% of those without a degree).

Those aged 20–24 were more likely to think energy is the most important issue (15% compared to ≤8% in other age groups).

### Knowledge about climate change

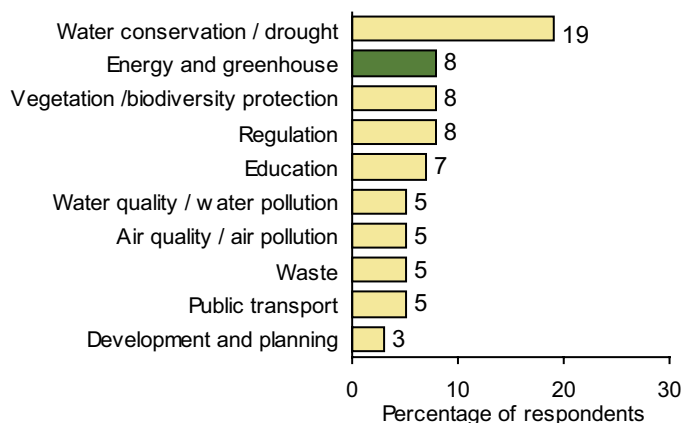
41% knew the greenhouse effect is not caused by a hole in the atmosphere, a steady increase from 24% correct in 1994. However, over half the population (53%) were incorrect on this issue; while 5% did not know enough to give an answer, suggesting a need for further education on causes of climate change.

Men (50%) were far more likely than women (34%) to be correct while more Sydney residents (44%) were correct compared to those in Hunter/ Illawarra (36%) or small country towns (39%).

### The most important environmental initiative for the NSW Government

For this question the responses for greenhouse/climate change and energy have been grouped together because they were commonly linked in the answers people gave<sup>2</sup>. Energy and greenhouse measures are the second highest (along with two others) in the number of people (8%) who nominated this as the most important environmental initiative for government. This has increased steadily from 4% in 2000. More specifically, people mentioned:

- finding/promoting alternative 'green' fuels/ alternative energy sources
- reducing greenhouse emissions
- solutions for reducing use of fossil fuels, and
- issues associated with considering nuclear power.



#### Context

Data for Who Cares was gathered mid-2006. Media stories on dramatic weather events, such as the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, had contributed to rising concerns about the potential impacts of climate change. Awareness of the broader environmental implications of energy use, particularly global warming was growing in Australia. There had recently been substantial rises in petrol prices and the nuclear debate had gained attention with the Commonwealth Government commissioning of a study into nuclear options for Australia.

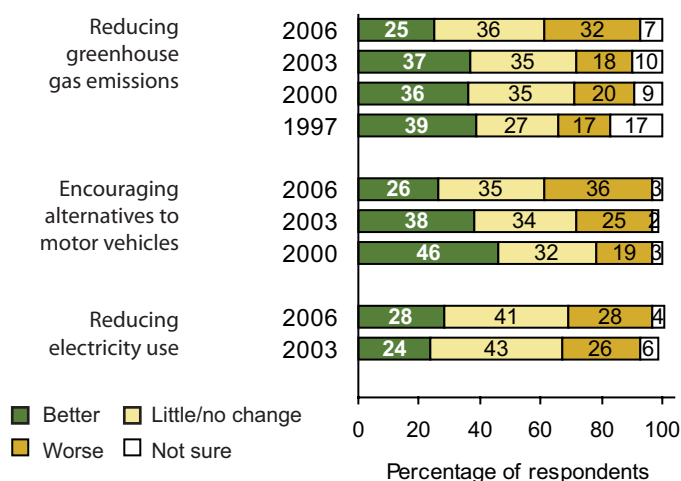
Since the data was gathered however, there has been a greatly increased focus on climate change. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* gained significant media and community attention, as did the UK's Stern Report on the economic impacts of climate change. The worsening drought made people think about climate change impacts, and energy issues have also been in the media.

<sup>2</sup> Climate change is closely linked with energy as an environmental issue. However, survey respondents did not necessarily make that link. Mentions of energy as a priority issue may have been simply concerns about security of supply. This fact sheet presents survey data related to both issues and specifies where respondents linked the two issues.



## Views on improvement or deterioration in energy and greenhouse issues in NSW

There was a significant change in perceptions about efforts to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions**, with an increase in negative, and decline in positive views. More people (32%) believed efforts to reduce emissions have been getting worse compared to getting better (25%). The number of people unsure on this measure decreased from 17% in 1997 to 7%, suggesting community awareness has increased on this issue.



Similarly, fewer people thought things were getting better at **encouraging alternatives to motor vehicle use**. Those who saw improvement almost halved from 2000 (46% to 26%) and those believing there has been deterioration almost doubled (from 19% to 36%).

An equal proportion of people (28%) thought that **reducing electricity use** had improved as thought it had become worse, but the greatest number saw no change. Perceptions on this indicator were first measured in 2003 and have changed only slightly since.

Younger people (aged 15–24) were more likely to think there had been improvements in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (36% compared to 20–27% in other age groups) and in using alternatives to motor vehicles (43% compared to 19–25%).

Sydney residents were more likely to see deterioration in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (34% compared to 23–28% in country areas) and in using alternatives to motor vehicles (40% compared to 26–33% in other areas). Those in large country towns were most likely to say using alternatives to motor vehicles had improved compared to those in other areas.

## Further education on greenhouse solutions

81% agreed more money should be spent on education campaigns about solutions to global warming. Nearly one third strongly agreed with this proposition (29%). Young people (15–24) were most likely to agree with this (88% compared to 74–81% for those aged 35+).

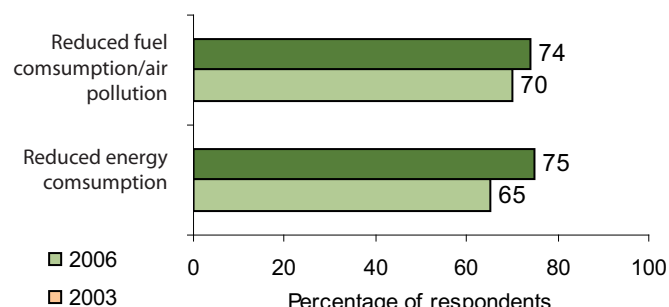
## What are people doing?

More people in 2006 than 2003 said they often engaged in behaviours associated with reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Those who reported often **reducing fuel consumption** jumped by 10% (to 48%) but the proportion who never tried to reduce fuel consumption is high at 18%, compared with many other pro-environmental behaviours included in the survey.

Those who said they had often **reduced energy consumption** in the past 12 months increased 3% from 2003. In another question, a majority (67%) reported purchasing energy efficient appliances or light globes in the previous year.

### Pro-environmental fuel and energy behaviours often done in the last twelve months



Women were more likely than men to have often or sometimes reduced fuel consumption (72% compared to 66%). It was more common in Sydney and the Hunter/ Illawarra (70–71%) than in large towns (62%).

Saving money was the most common reason (51%) given for reducing fuel consumption. Reasons for not trying to reduce fuel consumption included a lack of available infrastructure such as public transport (28%), not having any alternative but to use their car e.g. for work (19%), and the inconvenience and time spent using alternatives (14%).

Younger people were less likely to take action to reduce energy consumption (78–86% of 15–34s compared to 92–96% for those aged 35+).

Saving money was likewise the most powerful motivator for people to reduce energy consumption (53% gave this reason). People who never or just occasionally undertook energy reduction behaviours were less certain about why they were disengaged – often giving no reason, or laziness or forgetfulness as the cause.

Those in large country towns were more likely to name climate change as one of the two most important environmental issues (21% compared to 12–18% in other localities) but they were least likely to reduce fuel consumption (34% said never or just occasionally).

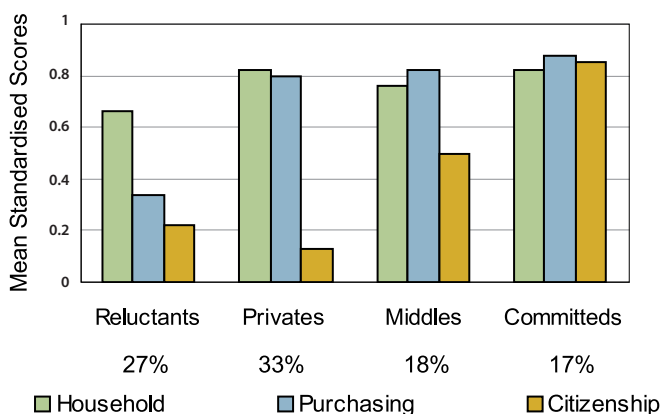


## Community segments

Pro-environmental behaviours surveyed in *Who Cares?* cluster into three types: in-household behaviours (e.g. saving water, energy, avoiding stormwater pollution), green purchasing (shopping decisions) and environmental citizenship (e.g. Landcare, community participation, advocacy).

Based on the extent to which they engaged in behaviours of these different types, those surveyed were allocated to four segments, called *Reluctants*, *Privates*, *Middles* and *Committeds*\*. The graph shows the level of involvement in each behaviour type for those in each segment and the proportion of the population falling into each segment.

**Behaviour profiles for community segments**



\* Different names to the focus group research are used to avoid confusion with the findings of that part of the research.

## Responses on climate change and energy

A much higher percentage of *Committeds* (81%) had often or sometimes taken active steps to reduce fuel consumption and to have done this for environmental reasons. *Committeds* were more likely to say that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is getting worse (44% compared to 27–33% in other segments). They were also most likely to say that addressing greenhouse gas emissions and the use of fossil fuels is the most important environmental initiative for government (12% compared to 7% of *Reluctants* and *Privates*).

*Reluctants* were the most likely to have never tried to reduce fuel consumption (40%) but for those who had, they were much more likely to say they did it to save money (69% compared to 45–49% of other groups).

The *Reluctants* were less likely than other groups to engage in most of the positive energy and climate related behaviours. However for purchasing energy efficient appliances both *Privates* (62%) and *Reluctants* (63%), had lower level of engagement than the *Middles* and *Committeds* groups (77–78%).

*Privates* were also least likely to know about the causes of the greenhouse effect, with 61% believing it is caused by a hole in the atmosphere.

## Qualitative research - focus groups

Focus group discussions were also held with people grouped on the basis of their level of environmental interest, knowledge and behaviours. These groups, called *Limiteds*, *Moderates* and *Strongs*, were quite different in their perceptions of the environment, understanding of environmental concepts and commitment to behaviours and activities that protect the environment.



## Responses on climate change and energy

There were striking differences in belief about the severity and timeframe of climate change between these groups. *Strongs* had no doubts about the seriousness and current consequences of climate change. Many *Moderates* were convinced that it is an increasingly serious issue but saw the consequences as affecting future generations and not themselves. *Limiteds* were highly sceptical about climate change as the effects aren't immediately visible and the science is complex.

*Limiteds'* narrow awareness of environmental issues and their difficulty in understanding complex concepts such as climate change act as a barrier to behaviour change. *Limiteds* will reduce electricity use or change to efficient light bulbs for financial reasons but they are least likely to do these things for environmental reasons as they consider environmental activism radical.

*Moderates'* behaviours are also more likely to be motivated by personal gain than environmental benefit and conserving electricity for cost reasons is normalised behaviour for this group.

With their concern about the immediate threat of climate change, *Strongs* are most likely to make considerable and expensive personal efforts, such as buying fuel efficient cars, carpooling or riding a bicycle and to engage in environmental activism around these issues.

## More details

*Who Cares about the Environment in 2006?* is available in print from the Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW on 131 555 and online at: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/whocares/)

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