

Participant Stories of the Living Smart Course Experience

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When I did a Living Smart Course in South Fremantle in 2005, I'd been working to promote sustainable transport for many years, had made the connection to climate change but not really put all the pieces together in my lifestyle. Living Smart set me on a journey that continues to this day. It started with finding a new action each week during the course, but just continued little by little over the years since.

I quickly halved my energy bills and switched to Green Power, but took another couple of years to get PVs. My home is now energy neutral, sending enough electricity back to the grid to 'offset' my gas. Veggie gardening came next, but still comes and goes with the trauma of harsh weather, pests or a trip away. Cutting water use seemed simple and signing up to an organic veggie box delivery inspired more healthy foods.

Everything came together through embarking on an eco-renovation of my weatherboard heritage cottage. Water tanks and ceiling fans went in, the garden got more mulch and a solar pergola transformed the thermal comfort. Now just experiencing a light-filled, comfortable home each day is enough to inspire more changes. I share this experience through 'house tours' with sustainability students and Living Smart groups from time to time.

I went part-time to be hands on renovating/extending the house and that, by accident, lead to me setting up a sustainable behaviour change consultancy. It seems that everything that matters to our planet is interconnected and the microcosm of my life has similar interconnections. From small light globe changes, bigger things just seem to happen.

Along the way I 'married' my work on sustainable transport with ways to 'coach' households on saving energy, water and waste: Living Smart Households was born – not as deep as Living Smart Courses, but a good first step for thousands of households.

I've found myself doing more in the community through talks at The Meeting Place and a brief stint on the Be Living Smart Board. Like my Living Smart journey such things come and go. My partner has always been the gardener, researcher and intuitive sustainability influence in our house. She took part in a Living Smart Course in 2011 and has revitalised our thinking on reducing waste, and productive gardening.

Looking back at the visioning drawings and notes I made in the Living Smart 'class of 2005', I'm still not living as simply or as connected to community as I'd like to be, but little by little that will come about, just as my bills, footprint and busyness have halved.