

# *Sustainability Made Easy*

WRITTEN BY

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# Acknowledgments

Some thanks are in order for a group of people who have helped me to create a piece of work that I cherish close to my heart and really encapsulates who I am as a person. This eBook was made with the goal of educating people who also take pride in living sustainably and I hope I have been able to provide some insight into an area which is so important to me.

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Overall, I simply cannot thank this team of wonderful people and my family enough, no matter the time or day I know they are always there for me and willing to help and make this eBook the best it can be. I hope you all enjoy this eBook which is so sentimental to me now – happy reading!

# Table of Contents

Introduction	<i>Page 4</i>
Chapter One: Sustainability	<i>Page 5</i>
Chapter Two: Elements	<i>Page 8</i>
Chapter Three: Food	<i>Page 14</i>
Chapter Four: Fashion	<i>Page 29</i>





Welcome to my eBook, the first in a two-part series. This first eBook is about the fundamentals of sustainability, sustainability made easy if you will. The second eBook, called *The Sustainability Perspective*, will be released in 2020. This book is divided into three chapters. Chapter one is definitional. I define what sustainability means, including different perspectives that may help you to understand and apply the concept. The second chapter is normative. Norms are about our values and value system. Essentially, norms related to how people live and what they value. The third chapter is instrumental. It's a way of applying sustainability in your life. In this chapter I will work through some things to consider when making choices about essential items such as fashion, food, and everyday living. But first and most importantly what is sustainability?

*To find out read on...*

A photograph of a small stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is clear and cascades over large, dark rocks that are heavily covered in vibrant green moss. The surrounding vegetation is thick and green, creating a sense of a healthy, natural ecosystem.

# Chapter One

- SUSTAINABILITY -

# What is sustainability?

What is sustainability? It's a question that many people ask themselves from aged eight all the way through to 98. It is a term that is thrown around in the media, business plans, and countless university or higher education courses. However, people interpret this word in different ways and many do not have a clear understanding of how or why this term is useful.

For me, sustainability is about longevity. If you look at the definition of "sustain" in the dictionary, it is about holding something for a long time. More formally, it is to "continue for an extended period or without interruption" (Oxford University Press, 2019).

If you look at the word "ability", it is about achieving something. Expanded "possession of the means or skill to do something" (Oxford University Press, 2019). If we combine the two concepts in the context of society; sustainability involves people being able to maintain a productive relationship with the earth.

Applying the concept of sustainability to business, I find the *triple bottom line* concept useful. This is about balancing economic, environmental, and social goals. In addition, I like to encourage my students and clients to think about creating value across these three areas (economic, environmental, and social). Rather than seeking to reduce harm (e.g., protect the environment), I try to think of solutions to economic or social problems that will create opportunities. For example, how can society build businesses that reduce the environmental harm of the past, present, or future (e.g., carbon capture and storage technology)?



I understand that this is challenging. The concept of sustainability is perplexing on many levels. Firstly, there is confusion about what the term means, as I highlight above. Secondly, people disagree with my definition. Many businesses and people take the harm minimisation rather than value creation approach. While this is ok, I would argue that it is not ultimately capable of achieving long-term (multi-generational) sustainability. Lastly, adopting the above approach of value creation, or business development, through sustainability requires a shift in thinking. Essentially, it is a change management process.

So, in summary, sustainability is about long-term thinking. Based on the approach of many business and individuals the definition of sustainability that I promote involves a change in the



way that individuals live their lives, especially in developed nations. It also involves a shift in the way that people interact with business. This book centres on the first question of “how can we as individuals live a sustainable life and contribute to a sustainability society?”. In the next

section, I provide some tips that I apply in my life to cover essential questions. In Chapter 3, I expand on this to show how I apply these concepts to feed and dress myself, and my children, in a sustainable way. I highlight small and impactful changes that you can make to contribute to the notion of creating value through sustainability.



# Chapter Two

-ELEMENTS-





“I can but hope, my heart filled with gratitude, that this spirit [of human curiosity] may be preserved and that it may spread its bounteous rays beyond the limits of our knowledge, over the whole of humanity”.

- Albert von Szent-Györgyi (1937)

Nobel Prize winner in Physiology or Medicine



Sustainability, as defined in Chapter 1, requires conscious action. Consequently, a value system for sustainability requires three key elements:

## *Element One*

### *Information and accountability*

The challenge: Understand and track your impact

Organisations don't make decisions - people do. Consider the impact of your decisions on the longevity of your business, the natural environment and broader community. Take action by being mindful of the consequences of your decisions. Consider if your decisions, especially purchasing decisions, could create a positive impact by supporting companies that seek to reduce their environmental impact or facilitate positive social change.

## *Element 2: Collaboration*

The challenge: Connect with dreamers

In 1970, before the likes of Greenpeace, Kermit the Frog warned us, "It's not easy being green." Boy, was he right. But was he also correct when nine years later he told us that one day, he, the lovers and the dreamers would find us the rainbow connection; that drives us to strive for more in life? When you face challenges, stop and take time to reflect. You are not alone. Seek out dreamers to help you.



## *Element 3:*

# *Challenge the status quo*

The challenge: Shoot for the moon

More than 50 years ago, U.S. President John F. Kennedy captured the world's imagination when he said, "This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth" in (Anthony & Johnson, 2013). And thus, the term 'moonshot' entered the lexicon as shorthand for a challenging aspiration, which is anticipated to have great positive impact on the world.



A concluding thought: Putting these three elements together, a value system for sustainability requires the pursuit of knowledge, action to build relationships to support change, as well as creative thinking to see new possibilities. However, it can also involve small incremental changes and actions, as I now explore through the lens of sustainable living, namely how to make positive choices around essential items such as food and fashion.



# Chapter Three

- FOOD -



# Sustainable Food



I love food – I always have. When I was young my mother would shop fortnightly. I quickly learnt the value of planning and rationing and how to get creative in finding a sugar hit. We had very little waste in our house and I have grown this is a philosophy that has stuck with me. I hate seeing food go to waste and I have grown a new pet hate – food packaging. In this section I highlight some of my strategies to reduce food waste, including the wasted and sometime dangerous plastics that come with food. I also provide some basic recipes that even I, a novice cook, can follow.



# Planning and Rationing

The key to avoiding food waste is planning. Each week I write a shopping list and keep essential items, such as rice and pasta, safely stored to avoid waste. I also order my food in the pantry by expiry date and do a weekly (or fortnightly) check to plan my meals around food items that I need to use up. I also store my food to minimise waste. Did you know that raw fruit and vegetables produce a natural gas known as ethylene? Ethylene is a gas, which ripens food (Han, 2010). I try to keep foods that produce this gas away from foods that do not. I do this to avoid the foods that produce ethylene speeding up the ripening process resulting in unnecessary waste. In line with my concept of the triple bottom line, storing food correctly and only buying what you need saves the planet as well as your money.

# Eating Seasonally

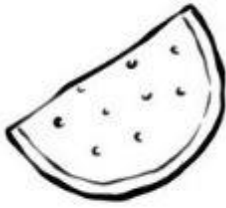
Seasonal grocery shopping is most convenient because there are plenty of in-season fruits to purchase for your family. It is also the most affordable since transport cost is reduced, resulting in a reduction in greenhouse gases from supplier trucks such as carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. These gases have many negative effects on the planet such as emitting ozone and causing health issues such as cancer and respiratory problems.

The nutritional value of in-season foods is much higher. This is because it is fresh, and consumption is closer to the time the fruit was harvested. When fruits are stored for long periods, they lose much of their antioxidants such as Vitamin C, Folate and Carotenes. Fruits that are locally in-season also look more colourful while those that aren't have a drying look to them because they have lost a lot of their nutritional value.

Seasonal eating is the consumption of foods that are ready and ripe in the climate that you live in. This is when the food is highest in its nutritional value (Georgiou, 2019). By consuming the foods that are in-season in your climate, you are also supporting your local farmers (Adelaide Farmer's Market, 2019).

Below is a short table of seasonal fruits, vegetables, herbs, and spices available in the southern hemisphere.





# Seasonal Eating

What time of the year yields the best produce?



Fruits & Vegetables



*Dec - Feb*

APPLES  
APRICOTS  
BANANA

ASPARAGUS  
AVOCADO  
BEANS

STRAWBERRIES  
WATERMELON  
ZUCHINNI

PINEAPPLE  
CORN  
CAPSICUM

*Mar - May*

GRAPES  
LIME  
LEMON

ARTICHOKE  
BROCCOLI  
LETTUCE

PASSIONFRUIT  
ORANGE  
CUCUMBER

MUSHROOM  
EGGPLANT  
PEACH

*Jun - Aug*

MANDARIN  
PERSIMMON  
TANGELO

RHUBARB  
BEETROOT  
CABBAGE

POTATO  
PEAS  
PUMPKIN

RADISH  
FENNEL  
KIWI FRUIT

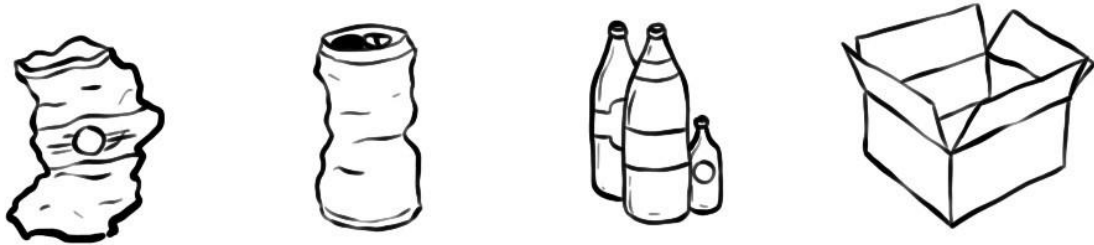
*Sep - Nov*

CHERRY  
HONEYDEW  
ORANGE

TOMATO  
SWEET POTATO  
PARSNIP

CARROT  
CELERY  
LYCHEE

SPINACH  
TURNIP  
MULBERRIES



## *Avoiding Excess Packaging*

As highlighted earlier, I hate excess packaging! However, I understand that it can be difficult to completely stay away from food packaging. I try to reduce my impact by choosing items that come in materials that are easier to recycle or are biodegradable. Using materials that are recyclable has been shown to reduce household costs (Industrial Packaging, 2019). This is because you are reusing products that are sustainable rather than one-time purpose products, which in return not only helps reduce waste but also save money (Sonneveld, et al.2005).

There are four questions to consider when assessing the sustainability impact of packaging (Sonneveld, et al. 2005).

**Question One:**

How effective is the packaging? Can it contain the product and protect it through its lifecycle?

**Question Two:**

Is it efficient? Is the machinery and mechanics of the packing environmentally friendly? This includes production (energy and water use), as well as transport.

**Question Three:**

Is the packaging cyclic? Are the materials recycled and/or recyclable or degradable?

**Question Four:**

Is the product safe? Does it pose any risks to human health or the planet?



The World Economic Forum (2016) predicts that by 2050, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish. This means that oceans will contain at least 937 million tons of plastic and 895 million tons of fish by 2050. This is concerning for people as well as the planet. Much of this plastic is known as “microplastic”. Microplastics are tiny pieces ranging from 5 millimetres down to 100 nanometres in diameter. These microplastics are entering the food chain and, ultimately, our bodies. A recent study found that a portion of consumer-grade mussels in Europe could contain about 90 microplastics. Consumption is likely to vary greatly between nations and generations, but people who eat mussels (as an example) might eat up to 11,000 microplastics a year (Thiele & Hudson, 2018).

To help shortcut your decision-making process, here is a list of sustainable product options:

- **Biodegradable plastic:** is plastic that can be broken down easily
- **Paper and Cardboard:** recycling paper and cardboard requires less energy than it takes to produce it which makes it a very sustainable product package
- **Metals:** metals such as steel are one of the best sources for a sustainable product because it can be used again and again without the need to break the product down and recycle it. The minerals and fossil fuels used to create the product can-not be wasted because the product lasts forever
- **Glass:** Glass can be recycled endlessly with low energy use and it can reflect and absorb solar energy
- **Biodegradable corn starch composed items:** are made from natural plant materials and at the end of the product lifecycle can be easily composted



## *Include in a box: Organics then general waste*

Placing your waste into the correct bin is a great way to ensure that your waste is being sent to the correct facilities to be managed in a sustainable way (City of Marion, 2019). After the collection of your recycling bin, it gets taken to a recovery facility and the waste is separated into different categories such as cardboard, steel, glass and plastic. Afterwards each category is crushed and taken to manufacturing companies where they are rebuilt into new materials.

Generally recycling bins can be used for:

- > Clean paper and cardboard (newspapers, magazines, junk mail, envelopes, egg cartons, cardboard boxes - flattened)
- > Juice and milk cartons
- > Glass bottles and jars
- > Aluminum/steel cans and lids
- > Aerosol cans (empty)
- > Aluminum foil sheet, trays (clean and collected into at least a fist-sized ball)
- > All rigid plastic containers (drink bottles, shampoo and detergent bottles, ice cream and yoghurt containers, plastic plant pots)



Organic materials (food waste, tissues, used pizza boxes) can go in the organics waste bin. The balance (which should not be much) goes into the general waste. I have heard of people who only need to put out their general waste bin once per year. This is noble. I find, with a family of four, my general waste bin fills up once per fortnight or month (depending on what we are doing around the house). If you find your general waste bin is full every week perhaps:

1. Do an audit to see if you have separated your recycling and organic materials
2. Review the above packaging guide to reduce the amount of non-recyclable packaging that you are purchasing

# Simple Eating

Last but not least, I try to eat organic and simply. Here are some recipes that I love that may provide some inspiration.

## Smoothie Recipes

Smoothies make perfect seasonal drinks by blending seasonal fruits! They are also excellent waste preventers because you can throw fruits that are close to going bad into the mixer and having a healthy drink. Study shows that plant-based milks such as coconut, almond and soy milk leave a gentler footprint than dairy milk does. Furthermore, you may use greens such as kale and spinach as they can grow through most climates.



- Family Picnics



- Happiness

# Green Spring Smoothie

Prep time: 5 mins

Total time: 5 mins

Serves: 1 serving

## Ingredients

1 kiwifruit

¼ avocado

½ green apple

½ cubed honeydew

1 cup soy milk

Crushed ice



## Instructions

Add all fruits into a blender with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of soy milk. Blend until pureed and add the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  of soy milk while continuing to blend. Pour into a glass and add crushed ice as preferred.

# Notes

## **Using Fresh Fruit:**

Add some ice and hold off on adding any of the milk beverage at first. The mixture needs to be thick in order to blend up all the ingredients (you don't want spinning leaves and whole seeds!). Add the milk beverage only as needed to get things moving. Once pureed, add the rest of the milk beverage.

## **Sweetness:**

If using a pea protein powder that isn't vanilla or a lightly sweet original, a sustainable sweetener choice for this smoothie is coconut sugar. Or you can add just a few drops of pure stevia - since it is used in such small quantities and is low glycaemic, stevia is often considered a sustainable option.

# More Seasonal Smoothies

**Tangy Winter smoothie:** Blend 1 pear, 1 cup water, ½ apple and ¼ of freshly squeezed grapefruit juice. Finally, rim the glass with ¼ of a lime and add crushed ice as preferred.

**Summer Paradise smoothie:** Blend ¼ cup of boysenberries, ¼ cup of diced pineapple, ½ of a large fresh fig, ¼ cup mango with crushed ice and 1 ½ soy milk.

**Sweet Autumn smoothie:** Blend ½ cup of diced coconut with 1 banana, 2 tbsp honey crushed ice and 1 cup of coconut milk. Serve with sprinkled nutmeg.

# Food Recipes

Over the course of the next couple pages I have included a couple recipes which hold sentimental meaning by being passed down through the family and were the source of beautiful memories of cooking with my mother and grandparents. An added bonus to these recipes is that they also satisfy sustainable cooking methods. Both require no packaging that could harm our environment and are easy to source sustainably produced ingredients. The most important takeaway is that they go down a treat with the family!





# *Fancy Nancy Cup Cakes*

Prep time: 5 mins

Total time: 20 mins

Serves: 12 small cup cakes

## Ingredients

Cup cakes:

2 cups self-raising flour

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup caster sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk

125g butter (melted and cooled)

2 eggs (beaten)

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

## Icing

Icing sugar (1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups) to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons of water

## Instructions

Pre-heat oven to 200 degree Celsius or 180 degree Celsius (fan/convection)

Combine flour and sugar (make a well)

Add milk, butter, eggs, and vanilla essence

Divide into twelve cup cakes (non-stick cupcake mould)

Bake for 15 minutes (depending on oven). Allow to cool.

Combine icing ingredients and ice – voila – cheaper, easier, and tastier than any pre-made pack you can buy!



# Three Ingredient Lemonade Scones

## Ingredients:

3 cups self-rising flour

1 cup heavy whipping cream (*not whipped*)

1 cup cold lemonade

## Instructions

Preheat oven to 200 degree Celsius or 180 degree Celsius (fan/convection)

Combine the flour, cream and lemonade in a bowl and mix until just combined. Do not over mix, it will make the scones dense! The dough should be soft and fairly sticky.

Turn out onto a floured surface, and gently pat down to 2.5 cm/1.2" thickness.

Use a 6 cm/2.5" round cutter to cut scones. Flour the cutter in between so the dough doesn't stick. I usually get 6 out of the first batch; then I combine and pat out the offcuts to make another 4.

Optional - brush the tops lightly with milk. This makes the tops nice and golden and helps smooth the top too.

Place on a lined or greased tray, slightly touching each other (they help each other rise) and bake for 12 to 15 minutes until golden on top.

Place on rack to cool. Place tea towel over them to stop the tops from getting crusty.

Serve with cream and jam, and of course tea – English Breakfast in a traditional tea-cup is my favourite.

# Chapter Four

- FASHION -



# Sustainable Fashion

As much as I love food – I love fashion, perhaps even more. In recent years I have become very aware of the environmental and social impact of my love of fashion. In this section, I share some tips that I apply to build a sustainable wardrobe for myself, and my children, that may provide helpful.

## Step 1: Chose sustainable materials

Material matters, especially in fashion. Owning clothes that are both durable and comfortable will ensure you are getting the best wear out of the pieces you buy.

There has been a spike in clothes made with less durable materials, known as ‘fast fashion.’ These trends offer quick turnover, and many conglomerates participate in this practice to reduce overheads and generate higher revenue. However, people shouldn’t think negatively on fashion, instead as a whole society can make conscious decisions that ensure we are making the right purchases for both ourselves and the environment. Fashion for good as some say.

Remember, buying well-made clothes that aren’t specific to a trend will take longer to go out of style, so spending that little bit extra is not such a bad idea. So what materials are we talking about when we are talking about sustainability? Here are some suggestions



- Ellouise & William



- My Cheeky Monkeys

# Organic Cotton



Organic cotton is nifty and cheap to purchase. Keep in mind this fabric is also the most environmentally damaging, though switching to organic cotton over regular can reduce the environmental impact significantly.

What's not to love about a breathable cotton summer dress? Ensuring your purchase is fair trade can also help in reducing the overall negative impact, not just environmentally but also to the communities who create the garment. Choose colours such as pale greens and creams to avoid any unnecessary and unfriendly dyes.

# Linen



Linen is the comfy fabric of your dreams. The sweet smell of fresh linen is enough to send you back into those childhood memories of new sheets. Garments made from linen are breathable, cute and make you look like the relaxed holiday version of you.

However, did you know that the base that linen is made from (flax) needs little water to grow making it a positive fashion choice when looking at sustainability? This means you are making an active choice to be sustainable by choosing linen- go you!

# Hemp



Eco-conscious humans rejoice! We have finally found your perfect match. Fast growing with little to no pesticides or chemicals, hemp is grown in a variety of climates and soil conditions, which has the potential to reduce transport emissions.

Soft yet durable, hemp is a great fabric option for pretty much anything – and that extends past clothes. A hemp two-piece is a summery look that will get heads turning.

# Bamboo



Not just panda food, bamboo will have your clothing collection seeing green! Let's talk about the great qualities bamboo can offer you- odour repelling, naturally soft and UV protectant this fabric is comfortable and feels great on the skin.

Its fast growth rate without chemical support means bamboo is incredibly sustainable.

# Wool



As you enter the winter months, you will start to search for warmer pieces. Wool is soft, long lasting and incredibly insulated which means you can keep a piece for years on end.

This material comes from a variety of animals including sheep, alpacas and llamas to name a few. However, this material is not vegan, so keep that in mind when considering the overall sustainability of the product.



## Step 2: Building a sustainable wardrobe

Everyone wants to be in with the current styles, but what kind of impact does this have on our environment?

New wave fast fashion wastes resources and pushes negative impact onto communities that create the clothes in sweatshops.

The decision to streamline your closet and own a few good quality pieces can mean you look great and are making a conscious effort to reduce your carbon footprint.

How can you build a wardrobe that can be used year after year? Build the basics:

- > A white (good quality) blouse or shirt
- > Two basic tees (neutral tones)
- > A classic skirt and dress, suited to your body type (for the ladies)
- > A linen two piece (for men and women)
- > A wool jumper
- > A classic coat

Owning good quality versions of these pieces mean you will spend a little extra on ensuring your purchase is fair trade, but you will be able to keep these options on rotation with any other clothes you buy to reduce overall waste.

If you are the type of person that is obsessed with current trends, you can add additions each season and sell them when you decide they no longer belong in your cupboard.

Making sure your clothes avoid the trash for as long as possible is key. Don't buy clothes on a whim, love the pieces before you buy them and always consider the other pieces in your collection to make sure a new piece would fit.

Everyone has made a purchase we regret, and that's okay sometimes, but try your best to buy products that link back to your general style to avoid having a flooding wardrobe of clothes. You will never scream 'I have nothing to wear' again.

### **Step 3: Go circular**

We all love a cheap find, and recycling.

You can reduce your footprint and the drain on your bank by op-shopping for some pieces. This keeps your look unique while reducing the overall fashion waste in Australia. Most op-shops are charitable organisations, which means you are not only reducing your carbon footprint but are donating money towards a good cause.

Of course, you must consider what fits in your wardrobe, and your style, but there are some great pieces just waiting for you to find if you are willing to put in the time and effort. Ignoring the label on the pieces is a big part of this type of shopping. If you love a piece and you think it will go great with your pieces at home – get it!

Take your time while you are in the stores to ensure you are making the right choice. Plan your trip, and make sure you have some idea of what you want. Be open minded, but if you look for specific styles you will find it easier to make choices.

Question the purchase- ask yourself if you would make the purchase if the item was full price. If the answer is no, do not buy it, trust me, you will not wear it.

Lastly, get some inspiration from op-shopping Instagram accounts and Pinterest. This will help you recognise what you like and give you some ideas. Op-shopping is particularly good for accessories, you can find some great designer pieces at very affordable prices, and they are vintage!



# Onwards and Upwards!

So there you have it. For everyone who has every asked me “what is sustainability” or for those who have looked at me blankly when I say that I am a sustainability researcher and consultant – here are my key tips and hints on how to make the concept come to life. I firmly believe that we, are only limited by our imagination, determination, and resilience in our ability to transform our society into becoming more sustainable. I would love to hear your feedback and thoughts on any points raised in this eBook or topics that you would like me to cover in the future.



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