

Restoring the Earth

What happens today will change the earth forever. Extinction and the loss of biodiversity provide just one reason why we must treat our environment with more care, and help restore the Earth.

In Australia, as in other countries, invasive species of introduced plants, animals and fish, which have no native predators, have multiplied with devastating effects on soil, native vegetation and wildlife. Many animals are suffering great harm due to such introduced species as the European red fox and the blackberry bush. The mountain pygmy possum, for example, is threatened with extinction because blackberry bushes have destroyed most of the trees on which it feeds.

Many people have now realised the importance of biodiversity and contributed towards helping restore their natural environment: but once an animal or plant becomes extinct then the biodiversity in that region becomes unstable, threatening many other species.

There is also an increasing demand for and decreasing supply of fresh water. Most of Australia's water storage facilities have been only between 40 and 50 per cent full in the past few years and much of its east coast has had water restrictions for the past two. In addition, the country has a major problem of rising soil salinity.

Waste, and where we put it, is another major issue. Increasing amounts go to landfill, including massive amounts of e-waste. Much ends up in rivers and the oceans. The Yarra River in Melbourne, near our homes, is polluted with rubbish, including cigarette butts, general litter and dog waste floating in it. It is the same in Port Phillip Bay, where the river flows to the sea.

It is very important to help others to understand environmental issues and what they can do about them. Every piece of rubbish that is recycled, for example, helps reduce landfill waste.

We ourselves have been liaising with local government leaders including the Mayor and Council of Melbourne and the Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment of Victoria. The council is sponsoring some of our ideas, such as planting native species and weeding invasive ones, cleaning beaches, and creating plastic bag free zones – beginning with our local shopping strip.

Can we really leave this Earth in a state where our descendants will have to clean up our mess? Imagine living in a world where you could not see and interact with things we take for granted like forests, native animals and the stars, where the only place to view such wonders was in old pictures, movies and the zoo.

We must all work together for the environment. What we do today will help conserve our future.

Every action, no matter how small, will help our environment and biodiversity. Everything counts and makes a difference ■

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