



# SETTING THE SCENE FOR GREENER SCREENS



DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA  
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SUSTAINABLE  
SCREENS

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With increasing awareness of the environmental challenges that we face, more and more of us are looking at what we can do to reduce our impact. This document is designed to be the starting point for integrating sustainable production practices into your work as a filmmaker. There are countless opportunities for measures not listed here, so use this to guide inspire further action. Wherever you are on your journey to greening your processes, remember that *“from little things, big things grow”*. It is through our collective impact and building the conversation that change becomes possible.

Careful planning and support from heads of production are the building blocks to reduce the environmental impact of your production and inspire the team. One person alone cannot make a production sustainable, but with communication and engagement, we can spread the message throughout the industry and change what’s possible. Consider the inputs to your production, such as energy, fuel, materials, food and water, and the carbon emissions, waste, and materials that are generated. As an industry, together we must create a better standard and use our industry’s platform to push for the change that we want to see.

First, consider: Do you actually need to film? Can you license existing footage?  
Can you contract local crew for filming?

## **Acknowledgements:**

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Resources that have informed the research include [We Are Albert](#), the [Green Production Guide](#), the Centre for Social Impact and Media’s [Code of Best Practices in Sustainable Filmmaking](#), and the Doc Society [Green Documentary Protocol](#).

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## ACTIONS FOR ALL

A few simple tips that everyone can do to participate in sustainability everyday.

- Set your default search engine on computers to [Ecosia](#) to plant trees with your internet searches.
- Avoid single-use items and bring your own water bottle, cup, cutlery, etc.
- Look for opportunities to incorporate environmental themes or sustainable behaviours on screen - and never show plastic water bottles, plastic bags, or disposable coffee cups.
- Ask suppliers if they have sustainability policies or green alternatives - every conversation matters. Supply is influenced by demand.
- Hire whenever possible. When buying new, consider what things are made of, how they’re made and where they come from. Buying local, recycled or natural products creates lower carbon emissions.

## COMMUNICATION

Start talking about your sustainability impact with your crew, and everyone that you're working with. Communication is one of the most powerful tools we can use to shift the industry into a greener future.

- Set clear sustainability goals and brief all crew and cast - make it a team effort and get everyone involved. Planning in pre-production can set the tone for the whole production.
- Track the measures you are taking so you can share the good news!
- Film and television has the power to inspire and influence ideas, use your platform to show positive behaviour and actions on screen.

## ENERGY AND LIGHTING

The biggest part of a production's carbon footprint is energy use. First seek to lower energy use with efficient technologies, by powering down and streamlining equipment. Ask suppliers for energy efficient options which can be more cost effective in the long run.

- Contract renewable energy providers, and ask facilities and locations if they do the same.
- Reduce the use of space heaters.
- Preference LED lighting for filming and in offices to lower energy demand.
- Reduce energy load and tie into mains power to avoid the need for generators.
- Track and offset the carbon emissions of your productions.



## TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

Transport is another key contributor of a carbon footprint, particularly with projects shot on location. In the absence of viable alternatives, implement whichever measures are available to you.

- Turn off vehicles while waiting to lower localised pollution. Idling for 10 seconds creates more carbon emissions than restarting your engine.
- Hire local crew whenever you can and consider the number of crew travelling to reduce air travel.
- Encourage carpooling if COVID safe. Hire vans to transport everyone together and minimise the number of individual trips during shoots.
- Hire small cars unless needed, and request hybrids where available. SUV's and large vehicles use significantly more fuel.
- Establish unit bases and accommodation close to filming locations. Consider hiring community centres or church halls to support the local community.

## WASTE

Setting up clear and consistent systems lowers waste to landfill and helps to keep valuable materials in use through recycling. Reduce waste inputs as much as possible, and responsibly manage the outputs.

- Provide clearly signed waste separation systems and promote recycling as a minimum.
- Consider additional recycling streams where available, including compost, soft plastics and PPE.
- Collect all electronic waste, including batteries, for proper and safe disposal at free drop off sites. These can be toxic if sent to landfill.
- Donate all props, set materials and consumables to charities, not-for-profits, local theatre groups, schools and donation hubs to reuse materials. This supports people in need and saves on your waste disposal costs.

## SINGLE-USE ITEMS

While some disposable items may be necessary, with adequate planning and communication, many can be avoided. Always ensure appropriate hygiene measures are taken and water stations are regularly sanitised. Reducing single-use lowers purchasing costs and waste management and collection expenses.

- All crew should use their own water bottle and coffee cup. Phase disposable options out completely.
- Use bulk products to refill individual containers, e.g. sanitiser and hand wash.
- Minimise the use of disposable items including lighting gels, blackwrap and tape. Never buy polystyrene.
- Invest in rechargeable batteries which pay themselves off after ~6 uses.
- If disposable masks are required, cut ear loops prior to disposal so they are not a risk to wildlife if they make it into the environment. Recycle them in a pre-paid PPE recycling box from [TerraCycle](#).

## PAPER AND TIMBER

An easy action for productions of all sizes is to first reduce the use of paper and wood products, and then to support the recycling industry by choosing recycled products. These are easy actions for productions of all sizes. Buying recycled post-consumer waste products or those with FSC certification helps minimise the loss of native forests logged for everyday products.

- Choose Australian made, post-consumer waste recycled products.
- Purchase 100% recycled copy paper, see the [Ethical Paper Guide](#) for suggestions.
- Choose paper products that are native forest free, 100% recycled and/or FSC certified, including toilet paper, tissues and paper towels.
- If using timber, ensure it has FSC certification and is from a verified source. Preference plantation or recycled wood.



## PRINTING

Eliminate the need for printing by going digital. This greatly increases efficiency, means confidential documents aren't left lying around, often saves money, and is better for the environment as less trees are cut down to make paper.

- Only print on request - have an 'opt in' policy for hard copies.
- View all documents digitally and refuse printed copies offered to you.
- Set printer defaults to double sided black and white, reducing costs and resources.
- Implement systems for digital start work documents, timesheets, accounting systems, scripts, call sheets, release forms and anything else typically printed.

## CATERING/UNIT

Consider where food is coming from, how it is served, and what's happening with anything leftover. Aim to reduce wastage, buy and support local, and lower your impact with what's on offer.

- Reduce meals that contain red meat as it has the highest carbon footprint. Consider Meatless Mondays.
- Request substantial vegetarian options be provided at all meal breaks.
- Use washable serviceware, plates and cutlery, and ask caterers to accommodate this request. If disposable items are required, compostable products made from natural fibres should be used.
- Consider who is supplying catering. Support small businesses, social enterprises and Indigenous owned businesses.
- Donate leftover food to community centres, charities or local groups - this is legal.

## EXAMPLES OF SUPPLIERS

[Green Power Solutions](#) - generators  
[Zenko](#) - office supplies  
[Pak360](#) - compostable service ware  
[Biopak](#) - compostable service ware and organic waste hauler  
[Waste Ninja](#) - organic waste hauler  
[Y Waste](#) - food donation app  
[Olio](#) - food donation app  
[Give Now](#) - online donation hub  
[Supply Nation](#) - Indigenous business directory  
[TerraCycle](#) - specialty recycling services  
[Carbon Calculator](#)

The above ideas are to inspire your research.  
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