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wake up to greenwash

With a booming new market of being green and the new political capital, always be on the lookout the unscrupulous, the undeliverable and the untrue. Don't be fooled by the hype of unethical companies (or politicians) that may spin green product or service credentials to win a sale or your support. Know how to spot a greenwasher. Always ask questions, read associated literature, check internet sites and read labels properly to make well-informed choices. If you suspect serious greenwashing you can refer the matter to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), which is clamping down on greenwash and misleading carbon offset claims.

- **do your research – know what you are buying and supporting**



Photo: Corbis Australia

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less is more

Every day advertisements encourage us to equate quality of life with consumption. But every item you buy contains embodied energy, water and waste in its production, transport and disposal. Some may say retail therapy is good for you, but our levels of consumer spending and consumption are unsustainable – and are costing our planet. Before making any purchase, ask yourself if you really need it. In most cases your life won't be any less without it. Every dollar you save will also save about 1.6 kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions. Achieving a sustainable lifestyle means buying a bit less of everything. Try it – set aside a day to be 'Buy Nothing Day'.

- **shop for what you need**



Photo: Corbis Australia

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vintage fashion

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Besides food, clothes shopping has the highest environmental impact of all consumer activities. About 150,000 litres of water is used in the production and transport of new clothes bought by the average Australian household each year. Resist artificially created fashion cycles and step out in your own recycled style. Rather than buying a new pair of jeans that have undergone an industrial process to give them that worn look, buy a pre-worn pair. The garments you can find in vintage clothing shops are often better than new items and cost a fraction of the price.

- **buy second-hand and vintage clothes and shoes**



Illustration: Martin Kyle

economy

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pack it in

A single person in Australia will dispose of about 90 kilos of packaging every year. Each year the nation throws away more than 3.4 million tonnes of packaging and less than half of it is recycled. Excessive packaging is a problem that won't go away. Buy in bulk where you can, and favour fresh produce from local markets over plastic-wrapped supermarket goods. Choose reusable packs – and reuse them. Opt for products with minimal packaging and always look for recycling symbols. All plastics marked one to seven are theoretically recyclable, though some councils only recover codes 1 PET (polyethylene terephthalate), 2 HDPE (high-density polyethylene) and 3 PVC (polyvinyl chloride). Check with your council and avoid packaging destined to become landfill.

Illustration: Martin Kyle

- **reduce your packaging consumption**

