

## The Importance of Biodiversity to your Life and Health

Today the health of each person depends on good health services, effective drugs, short waiting lists, efficient accident services and a healthy lifestyle. Like all other human achievements, these ultimately depend on the Earth's ecological services. Without ecological services, the Earth would be 'dead' like many other planets including our neighbouring planets in the solar system. It follows that the protection of these services is vital to maintaining all the advances we have made in medical science and in providing a future for further advances.

### You are part of biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of all life-forms: the different forms of animals including humans, plants, and micro-organisms. They work together like human industries and we call their activity "ecological services". Examples of ecological services are the provision of food from the soil, purified water, degradation of wastes and pollutants, recycling of nutrients, stabilization of climate, protection against flood and storm, and provision of materials for shelter and medicines. Humans cannot survive without these services. **The web of life** (top right on the poster) shows some of these essential services provided by plants and animals.

### Please measure your ecological footprint

Humanity is destroying biodiversity; the reasons are listed on the Footprint in the centre of the poster. Humans now use more than 50% of the Earth's productive land leaving less and less to support all the other species that provide us with ecological services. Our health and wellbeing are affected.

You can measure your ecological footprint. This will tell you about your impact on the natural world. The larger your footprint, the more you displace other species and use up resources that all species rely upon for your continuing life and health.

On the poster we suggest a SA government site for you to access a calculator. Unfortunately the site has changed since we printed the poster and we suggest therefore that you go to <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/ecologicalfootprint/calculators/default.asp> or, to the Ecological Footprint Quiz on <http://www.earthday.net/footprint/index.asp> or, to the ACF Eco-Calculator [http://www.acfonline.org.au/custom\\_greenhome/calculator.asp?section\\_id=86](http://www.acfonline.org.au/custom_greenhome/calculator.asp?section_id=86)

You will be shocked by the size of your footprint. The Earth provides us with **1.8 Global hectares** for each person's share of the natural resources. The average usage for each person on Earth is **2.2 Global hectares**. The average for each Australian is **7.7 Global hectares**.

### Reducing your footprint will improve your health

The purpose of you measuring your footprint is to understand which of your actions is causing you to take an unfair proportion of the Earth's resources and to see in what ways you can reduce your impact. Doctors have found that reducing your footprint improves your health. For example if you can walk to work instead of using your car, your footprint will be smaller. You will produce less greenhouse emissions and be less likely to suffer from obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

**If every person now living consumed resources as does the average Australian we would need 4 Earths to support that lifestyle.**

**You can do something about this in your own life and by using your influence to get government to make the necessary big decisions.**

You can access this material on [www.dea.org.au](http://www.dea.org.au) Doctors for the Environment Australia