

Earth Day:

How Can We Address Global Environmental Challenges?

By Sophie Monaco – Environmental Specialist

Increasingly it seems as though the environment is slipping down the global political agenda. Which is interesting because now more so than ever the global community is faced with managing unprecedented environmental challenges. Especially when we consider that the environmental challenges such as climate change and water security we are faced with are intertwined with economic and social policy. On a global scale how do we address these environmental issues? How do we put the environment back on the global political agenda?

Geopolitics and Environmental Issues

Ask any environmental scientist and they will tell you that pollution, and other environmental factors, are not bound by geographical boundaries.



Politics on the other hand, is defined by geographical boundaries. Whether that be local, state or country boundaries, there is almost always a limit to the extent of coverage of a policy. Geopolitics defines the way that policies and international relations are influenced based on geographic boundaries, between countries and states and how these relationships frame policy.

We know that worldwide issues like natural disasters, loss of agricultural land, natural resource insecurity, land degradation and displacement of communities, to name a few, are connected in some way to the environment. Climate change predictions indicate that these issues are likely to be magnified in the years to come. Addressing these issues requires a common global aim and consolidated effort with geopolitics playing a key role in shaping environmental policy. Global agreements like the United Nations Paris Agreement aim to provide a platform to discuss and strategise on global environmental issues. Unfortunately, these agreements are not binding for most countries and the current global political agenda seems to be one where countries are focused on internal issues and balances of power. As a result, we've seen the environment slip of the radar.

Earth Day

In political climates similar to what we now find ourselves in, global movements by non-government organisations are a way to provide information and promote environmental issues in the community. Through these types of movements people and companies can become involved and do their part to reduce their environmental impact – without the need for government policy.

The Earth Day Network hold events and activities every year on April 22nd for Earth Day



Geopolitics vs the Environment



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with the aim to diversify, educate and activate people worldwide on environmental topics for global change. The focus for Earth Day 2018 is to 'end plastic pollution'. A topic which has gained huge interest and action in recent years. The Earth Day Network aim to mobilise key actors, institutions and citizens across the globe to bring about a new level of consciousness about plastics pollution. In turn bringing a paradigm shift and ultimately influencing global policy on plastics. So, what are you doing on Earth Day to help address some of our local and global environmental challenges?

Get involved in Earth Day

Some ways to get involved include adopting or changing small parts/activities in your day to day life. Try some of these simple activities to help reduce the environmental impact occurring in WA and Australia:

- ◆ **Stop the use of single-use plastics:** send a strong message to retailers and those around you by refusing to use single-use plastic items like disposable straws, drink bottles and coffee cups.
- ◆ **Recycle properly:** make sure that you only put approved recyclable items in your recycling bins. Recycling plants utilise people as part of the recycling process, so contaminated materials puts them and the recyclable materials at risk.
- ◆ **Renewable Energy:** Where possible switch to renewable energy options, such as solar, wind or waste-to-energy sources.
- ◆ **Reduce, reuse, recycle and re-purpose:** rather than disposing of items consider whether it can be reused, repaired or even re-purposed. Get innovative and crafty to fight consumer culture and save you a little bit of money.
- ◆ **Manage Water use at home:** reduce water use in the home and prevent waste of water. Use efficient water saving taps, make sure there are no leaks and even check that all your sprinklers are working properly (a broken sprinkler wastes a lot of water and does nothing for your garden).
- ◆ **Keep environmental impact in mind:** especially when you are making changes in your business. Simple things like using recyclable materials as an alternative to new resources can reduce the overall impact of your business.
- ◆ **Prevent Land Clearing:** Maximise the use of land that is already cleared to prevent the clearing of further untouched land.



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■ environment ■ safety ■ community

Earth Day Events in WA

How about participating in one of these local Earth Day Events?

End Plastic Pollution

Get involved with the End Plastic Pollution campaign. Find out more [here](#).

Planet Earth II - Live in Concert

Planet Earth II – Live in concert will include footage from the BBC Earth Series enhanced by the WA Symphony Orchestra. It will be held in the Perth Arena on 27th April, 2018. Tickets are required.

To get involved with Earth Day activities and events check out their [website](#).

Interesting Articles

Beyond reduce, reuse, recycle: The 9 'R's of a sustainable life: <https://www.greenpeace.org.au/blog/beyond-reduce-reuse-recycle/>

Earth Day Tool Kit: <https://www.earthday.org/earthday/toolkits/>

