

GREENHOUSE GASES

Australians are one of the world's highest producers of greenhouse gases per head of population. Australian households contribute to greenhouse gas build-up through everyday activities such as transport, domestic energy-use and **household waste decaying in landfills**. Approximately 6% of household greenhouse gas emissions come from the decay of household waste in landfills. Greenhouse gases are a natural part of the atmosphere. It is the increase in the amounts of these gases (such as carbon dioxide and methane) through human activity that causes global warming.

When organic materials (such as food scraps and garden waste) are sent to landfill, their decay creates carbon dioxide and methane. This landfill gas contributes to the odour problems experienced at landfill sites. The control and collection of this gas is a major environmental protection measure. The production of landfill gas begins soon after the waste is buried in the landfill and continues for many years. In recent years, new technology has allowed landfill gas to be used as an energy source.

Poorly-maintained compost heaps, where there is no circulating fresh air, can also produce a mixture of gases including methane.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Compost food and garden organics instead of putting them in your garbage bin and sending them to landfill
- Use the green organics collection provided by your local council, or take your excess garden organics to your local landfill for composting.
- Leave grass clippings and leaves to break down naturally in the open air.
- Make sure your compost heap has plenty of air by turning it regularly – if it smells, there is not enough air.
- Use a worm farm in addition to your compost heap.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.greenhouse.gov.au - information from the Australian Greenhouse Office
- www.northeastwasteforum.org.au/NEWF/CMS/uploads/ATOZ/GARDEN_ORGANICS.pdf - Check out the North East Waste Forums garden organics fact sheet for more information about composting and mulching.
- www.greenhouse.nsw.gov.au - NSW Government climate change website.