

ECO-MY-FLAT IS GO!

Sharon Mciver



WHAT I LEARNED ON ECO-MY-FLAT

Lisa Geary

Living sustainably has a lot to say for itself. Our reliance on supermarkets, petrol, electricity and emergency services has been questioned a lot lately. If we can't buy our food off the shelves, drive our cars to reach loved ones, turn on a switch to see in the dark, or dial a number for medical help, how will we survive? I believe the answer lies in being sustainable, self-reliant and resilient. If there is ever a time to learn how to live sustainably, it's now.

Being involved in eco-my-flat last year was a great experience. I learnt a lot about how to live more sustainably and I was made more aware of why we should. I also met some cool people, got heaps of free giveaways and can say in hindsight I now feel

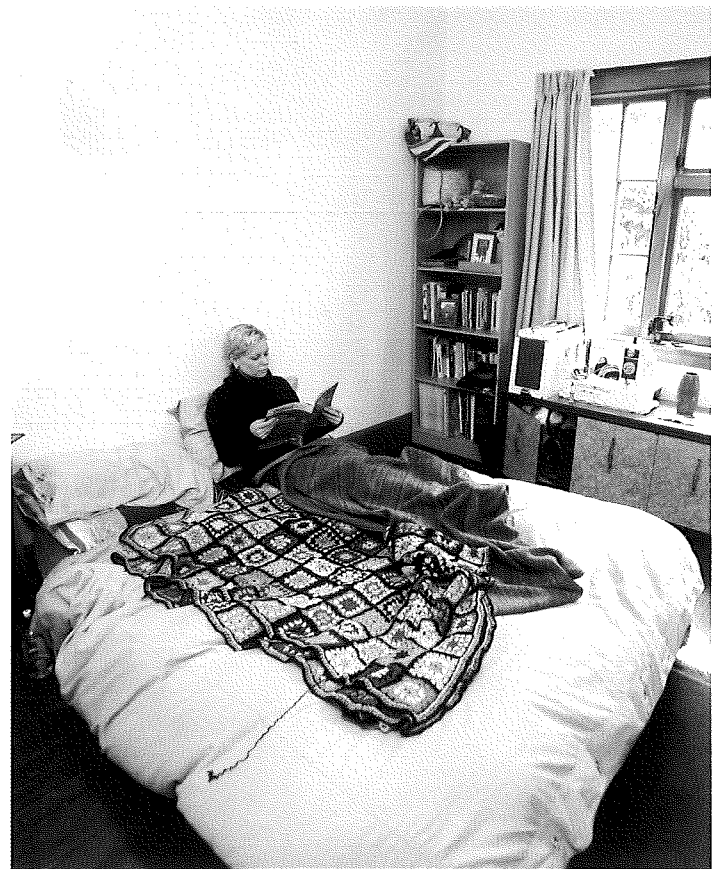
The fourth annual eco-my-flat competition where students compete to be crowned the winners of the Most Eco-flat at Canterbury was due to start on March 1, but in the tradition of the best laid plans of mice and man going awry, it will now run from May 9 to August 8. We're taking sign-ups now and will be until May 6 at www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecomylat.

And, in response to recent events, the 2011 competition will incorporate an element of survivalism with an extra workshop added on preparing emergency kits and collecting and storing water.

With free workshops, loads of giveaways and heaps of prizes, this year the winners of the Most Eco-flat Overall will win a trip to the West Coast via the Tranzalpine train and Intercity Coach, to be delivered to beautiful Punakaiki for a stay at the stunning Te Nikau Retreat (www.tenikauretreat.co.nz).

Besides all the great prizes, eco-my-flat is a fun way to bond with your flatmates and stay warm and well fed over winter. And with workshops on home-brewing, op-shopping, cooking, gardening, cleaning, and body care, you'll save heaps of money too.

But don't take my word for it, here's a plug for eco-my-flat from



more confident and prepared for events such as earthquakes.

When I moved into a new flat last year, the first thing that found its place was a pink, cream and black backpack that sat rather obviously at the entrance. Visitors would come in, point to the bag and say, with a hint of sarcasm, 'let me guess, your survival kit?' Others rolled their eyes. My new flatmate even smirked when I explained why it had to stay there.

Yet when, on February 22, after a two-hour walk through liquefaction, I arrived home to find her sitting amongst the bag's contents on the lounge floor, ear glued to the survival kit radio, it was my turn to smirk.

Being prepared for something like that has been drilled into us via the 'Get ready, get thru' ads on TV, yet all these years we thought 'nah, it will never happen to us'. To quote a well-known advertising slogan, 'yeah right!' Those who did take it seriously and did prepare were the ones who came out better off, and it's those who tend to live on the sustainable side that were best prepared, and the most comfortable.

At eco-my-flat you'll learn about gardening, water and power conservation, preserving food, and brewing your own beer. Never before have we experienced a time when these things are not only useful – they're necessary.

So take the eco-my-flat challenge and learn to survive!

