

Steve's Story

I arrived in Australia, from England in 1970 and have lived mostly in Perth. My interest in computers began in the early '80s, with a 'ZX80', which I upgraded to an Amiga in the late 80s and attempted some Basic programming.

I became interested in solar energy in the late 80s, examining solar home heating using air. Necessity drove me to design and manufacture a solar optimised pergola in 1990; I wrote a Basic program to help with quoting jobs and control of the business. Though not pretty, the program did just what I required.

Around 2000 I moved to Manjimup WA and joined the local renewable energy group (WDREG). During this time I met Ben Rose, who was developing a spreadsheet calculator for showing greenhouse gas emissions for households. Discussion within the group raised the reluctance of average persons to use spreadsheets. I suggested to Ben that I would have a go at programming a stand-alone calculator that would give the same functionality of the spreadsheet in (hopefully) an easy to use format. Knowing that it would be extremely hard to make something worthwhile using Basic, I decided to have a go with a program called Delphi, which is a 'program to assist in making programs'.

About that time the AGO funded WDREG in a project called Cool Communities, aimed at reducing the community's energy use. The first GHG-Calc (as we decided to call it) showing was at a group meeting of Cool Communities participants. Though a few glitches occurred, the general feeling was positive toward improving it. Ben and I persisted with it, and were finally confident enough to place it on the group website. It was also decided to give the option to show energy use.

We continue to make improvements with access to better data and the help of feedback from users. I moved back to Perth in 2005, to continue with working with solar and energy related projects.