

NEW YEAR, NEW CHALLENGES

The New Year is a time when many people welcome the fresh start with ambitious personal challenges. The *Straits Times* speaks to three individuals with New Year's resolutions that embody a wider purpose – from helping kidney patients to reaching out to inmates and saving the environment.

Ms Pamela Low gets her drink orders in reusable cups and without straws from Mr Henry Chua Kay Chee, who runs Fresh Fruit and Juices stall at the National University of Singapore.
ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO



Not buying new clothes for a greener earth

Audrey Tan

This year, undergraduate Pamela Low wants to go on a diet.

It is not sugar and carbs that the 22-year-old wants to consume less of, but disposables.

The environmentally-conscious student already carries around a reusable bag for her shopping, and her own bottle and container when buying food and drink for take-out.

She is going one step further by making a New Year's resolution of not buying new clothes.

"I will shop second-hand at thrift shops, or find outfits from my own wardrobe, my parents' and sisters'.

This way, I can save a piece of clothing from going into the landfill and save money," said Ms Low, a member of the Singapore Youth for Climate Action (SYCA).

SYCA is one of the groups that the Ministry for the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) is consulting on ideas for campaigns to raise awareness on climate change, as Singapore has designated this year as its Year of Climate Action.

Under this initiative, outreach efforts and campaigns undertaken aim to educate people on the impact of climate change, and the urgency of reducing carbon footprint, the ministry has said.

Ms Low, who was inspired to live

a greener life after spending five months in Germany on a student exchange programme last year, hopes that by living out her resolution, she can lead by example.

She said: "I feel that the individual can get desensitised and disenfranchised by and with the whole concept of climate change... Rising sea levels can feel quite far-fetched for the individual.

"But everyone can do something to reduce the amount of disposables they use. There are also economic and health benefits in using glass or metal ware instead of chemically-infused styrofoam and plastics – and that helps the earth too."

Personal goals aside, Ms Low said

she is also working with the National University of Singapore, where she is reading economics, and her alma mater, Tanjong Katong Girls School, to get their canteens to go "disposables-lite".

This means starting campaigns to promote the concept of eating in, instead of take-out, so that fewer disposable containers need to be used.

This includes putting up reminders at canteen stalls to let people know the options available – they can opt for no straw and to eat in, bring their own containers, or be charged for disposable containers.

The amount of waste Singapore generates has gone up – from 5.02 million tonnes in 2005 to 7.67 mil-

lion tonnes in 2015.

The excessive consumption of resources and deforestation have contributed to the production of heat-trapping greenhouse gases that cause climate change, the human-induced warming of the earth.

The rate of warming over Singapore from 1951 to 2012 was 0.26 deg C per decade, more than double the global average over the same period.

MEWR will officially launch the Year of Climate Action in the second half of this month, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, told *The Straits Times*. "Through the launch, we seek to create a stronger sense of urgency on the need to take action on climate change, and to energise the ground to pledge to join MEWR in the climate action journey," he said.

audreyt@sph.com.sg

EVERY EFFORT COUNTS

I feel that the individual can get desensitised and disenfranchised by and with the whole concept of climate change... Rising sea levels can feel quite far-fetched for the individual. But everyone can do something to reduce the amount of disposables they use. There are also economic and health benefits in using glass or metal ware instead of chemically infused styrofoam and plastics – and that helps the earth too.



MS PAMELA LOW