Environment problems increased in the late 1800s in Europe as people were moving from the country to the cities to work in the new factories. Air and water pollution increased as the number of factories grew. In the nineteenth century, there were no strict rules to deal with pollution.

It took decades for people to understand the harm that unchecked pollution was causing. In the 1960s, people started to realise that workers needed protection from the harmful side effects of industry and nature also needed protection. Pollution, deforestation and loss of wildlife and their habitats became major concerns to many people.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, environmental awareness grew worldwide. International groups were formed to educate people and to take action on local and global environmental issues.

The WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund, is one of the world’s largest conservation organisations. It began in 1961 and is now a global network of more than five million people in over a hundred countries.

WWF aims to stop the destruction of the earth’s natural environment and to work towards a future where humans and nature live in harmony.

In 2004, WWF launched the PowerSwitch! Campaign where teams in 20 countries set out to have governments cut pollution produced by coal power stations and consider switching to a cleaner, more efficient power. In 2008, the WWF was involved in the global event Earth Hour, where countries across the world switched off their lights for one hour.

Friends of the Earth, founded in 1969 in the United States by David Brower, became an international organisation in 1971. It now has over two million members and supporters in 70 countries, campaigning on urgent environmental and social issues.

Friends of the Earth Australia launched its national Climate Justice Campaign in 2001; one of the aims was to raise community awareness about climate change and its causes. The organisation is also involved in research into the causes and effects of climate change globally.