

CHARGING A YOUTH-DRIVEN DECARBONISER REVOLUTION

12 March 2019



Speaker at the 30 November 2018 school strike in Melbourne

Briefing paper for youth climate strike speakers

If you are one of the courageous teenagers who'll be taking the microphone on Friday to inspire hundreds or thousands of your peers about what we need to do now, here's some strategic advice from Centre for Climate Safety.

There are no requirements for what it takes to be a climate strike speaker. Which is fine, but since climate change is a complex issue, we suggest that there are a few basics which could help create some highly needed **clarity** on where we should be heading now, collectively, and why.

The core of the matter is: Contrary to the general the conception, at Centre for Climate Safety we don't recommend focusing on putting demands to politicians. The reason is that this is not the way we'll be able to create the kind of change which we, the climate and life on this

planet need to see. Adult climate campaigners have actually been trying that strategy for over a decade, and sadly with very poor results to show, as our carbon emissions are still rising year by year.

The real strength and potential in the climate striking youth movement lies somewhere else, and this is what this paper aims to explain in a brief and quickly read manner.

The basics. Five things. You'll need to know:

- what's working
 - what's stopping us
 - what's missing
 - what's coming
 - what's needed now
-

What's working

As a way to create renewed focus on the escalating climate crisis and the dire consequences of governments' current inaction, Greta Thunberg's strategy of leaving school is working. It is being noticed and talked about in the adults' world – especially among parents – and it provides a new momentum for change.

With a federal election coming up in Australia, this it provides an opportunity to make climate change a defining issue to who will be elected: it provides an opportunity for a new generation of climate action advocates to step up and kick the old climate delayers out.

Along with this, know that we currently are seeing not just one, but a number of promising global movements on the rise. They are related and feed into one another. Two of them are grass roots movements growing from bottom up and engaging citizens at 'street level', while two other ones are gathering strength within the corridors of politics:

- The **Fridays For Future** youth movement, lead by Greta, 16 years old
- The **Extinction Rebellion** movement, which started in the United Kingdom, and launches a global campaign in April
- The **climate emergency declaration** movement, lead by 380 councils around the world
- The **Green New Deal** in American politics, lead by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 29 years old

And that's only some of what we've got at the moment. There are so many interesting and important NGO-driven movements and campaigns out there – such as the **divestment** movement, the **regenerative agriculture** movement, the **transition** movement, the **global covenant of mayors** and... hey, we've actually got so much coming our way!

But only if we handle it right.

What's stopping us

Our public enemy Number One is **confusion**. Manufacturing confusion about the climate science has been as a deliberate strategic weapon to protect industrial interests and delay any sensible decision making that would get the carbon emissions under control. Media and science could have helped combat this confusion, but they failed.

Understand that this is far from an unusual situation when a threat is looming. Talking about the threat of Hitler's war-machine in May 1935, the British politician Winston Churchill described the phenomena as he addressed the UK House of Commons:

“Unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong—these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history.”

People have different opinions, and in a democratic sense, our diversity of opinions is a given, and seen as a strength. But when you want to create a movement for radical change, it can also be a weakness. Confronted with urgency and a monster problem as wicked as climate change, the difference of opinions about how to move forward has crippled and paralysed the numerous attempts to create a powerful, global movement for climate action at a level that actually fixed the problem.

What's missing

Confusion, not the climate, is our worst enemy right now. So what is the best 'confusion-killer'? Education. What's missing in our society is clarity. When you understand what climate safety in a zero-carbon society looks like, and how it could work, you are first of all not at all scared of it, because you can see the numerous benefits it will bring to society, and you are also able to see through the lies manufactured by the old, polluting industries, which will tell you that any changes are going to hurt you, or to put us back to the stone age living in caves.

Education is crucial, because we live in a democracy. Democracy means that we all respect that 'people power' is our ultimate decision maker. Our so-called political leaders are not leaders, they are followers: they listen to their voters and act on what they think is most important.

Understand that climate change is not an 'environmental' problem. Climate change is a 'people' problem. What's missing is public pressure for implementing the solutions and the laws that will protect us against the climate monster. As a youth climate striker, you are currently one of the most successful drivers for 'people power'.

What this means is that your role is not necessarily to come up with demands that you bring to the politicians. Unless you have the majority of your community behind you, politicians are not going to act on your demands. This is your strength. Your finest role as a youth climate action flagbearer is that you can be that educator who raises the level of collective consciousness and 'people power', transforming the way we think, and vote.

Start with your parents. Then your teachers and the principal. Then your councillors and church leaders. Educate, educate, educate!

What's coming

Importantly, because you understand the science, you know how bad things stand and how close we are now to a climate catastrophe, hence the need to step up and act fast. You understand why this can't wait til some other decade or some other generation. Winning slowly is the same as losing.

In Churchill's time, the enemy was an evil madman in Germany who thought it would be a good idea to conquer the world. Today, your enemy is an army of delayers who resist change and refuse to admit that it has been a devastating mistake to allow damaging the environment in the name of "progress" and "development". It created profits and wealth to the first generations doing it, but it shattered the ecological balance on the planet, and as it now increasingly is becoming clear, it has created a huge bill to be paid by the generations coming after them.

“Global temperatures spiral out of control, ice caps melt, and sea levels continue to rise. Over time, the planet undergoes widespread desertification and suffers mass extinctions. Powerful storms and extreme conditions such as drought and deluge become common characteristics of everyday life, transforming a previously lush planet into a giant nightmare factory...”

~ John Sweeney, The Hill opinion contributor

That is, in brief, the bill your generation rightfully is refusing to accept.

What's needed now

In summary, what we need now is:

- **Synchrocity:** We don't need to all agree, but we need to sync our efforts, timelines and goals
- **Collaboration:** We can't all be first-movers. To collaborate, we need openness and sharing, we need consensus-seeking and willingness to support someone else's idea if it is proving to work better
- **Confidence and determination:** If you don't accept an unsafe climate, ecosystem collapse, death and destruction as the future you are heading for, then there is no alternative to a 'decarbonisation revolution'. When enough individuals make radical low-carbon choices at individual level, they have the power to shock and shake the established habits and to turn around the entire economy and power-base of the old industry leaders and politicians.
- **Lead by example:** Become carbon-savvy. Know that your carbon footprint is made up of, and where it is most effective to make the first radical changes in your lifestyle. Not because this will "save the planet", because it won't, but because it is a way to express how you feel, and it gives you the ability to inspire others not by what you say, but by what you do. How you live. When thousands and hundred of thousands collectively express their feelings, it becomes a game-changer in politics. It creates political change. Always has, always will.

There is no point in waiting for some 'climate-Churchill' to step into Parliament and save us all. Also no point in knocking on the politicians' doors to demand various new policies from them, unless of course on that day when you are confidently speaking with a clear mandate from the majority of society, including that of your own parents – in other words: unless the overall *story* in society has finally changed.

The problem here is that could be "missing the boat" while waiting for Godot, and while the CO2 levels pass more dangerous tipping points.

Climate Emergency Declaration news



Canada: Declaration of climate emergency campaign in Québec

Posted on 27 February 2019

A climate emergency movement has grown in the French-speaking Canadian province of Québec. As of February 2019, more than 300 municipalities throughout Québec have endorsed a Déclaration d'Urgence Climatique – a climate emergency declaration, representing more than 70 per cent of the Quebec population. The Declaration has also been deposited with leading institutions such as [...]

Posted in [news](#) Tagged [Canada](#) [Leave a comment](#)



Climate emergency declarations in 369 councils cover 31 million citizens

Posted on 16 February 2019

Populations covered by governments that have declared a climate emergency now exceed 31 million citizens in four English-speaking countries and Switzerland, with 17 million of these living in the United Kingdom. These are the overall figures, according to population statistics available via the Internet: Australia: 10 councils, 809,379 persons United Kingdom: 38 councils (including 1 [...]

Posted in [news](#) Tagged [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [United Kingdom](#), [USA](#)



Australian parents gathering around climate emergency message

Posted on 4 February 2019

[Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Youtube](#) | [Facebook](#) "If the candidates in the Australian election do not come up with some serious climate emergency actions and policies and get on with it now, we will not vote for them." That's the message of a new and fast growing group called Australian Parents for Climate Action. Co-founder Suzie Brown explains [...]

Posted in [news](#) Tagged [Australia](#)



United Kingdom: Oxford City Council unanimously backs climate emergency motion

Posted on 31 January 2019

On 28 January 2019, Oxford City Council unanimously backed a climate emergency motion. "We've just had a historic vote at Oxford City Council – we declared a climate emergency. It's just the first step in a long journey to actually reduce our carbon emissions, so that means looking at every single policy, every single decision [...]

<https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/category/news/>

Recent tweets about the Green New Deal



[Ro Khanna](#) ✓ @RoKhanna

The brave young activists with [@SunriseMvmt](#) have supercharged the debate on climate change as they advocate for the Green New Deal and getting fossil fuel money out of our politics. Here are their stories.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/04/can-the-y-save-us-meet-the-climate-kids-fighting-to-fix-the-planet?fbclid=IwAR2dXZL49a253hFhRe6BMhNs3LJ6MwmHgBI46mv-ZUnVdA9v-CSKchUb60w>

786 [4:09 AM - Mar 10, 2019](#)



Adults failed to take climate action. Meet the young activists stepping up

Some are calling climate change this generation's civil rights movement. These are the young activists leading the charge

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

255 people are talking about this



[Kate Aronoff](#) ✓ @KateAronoff

If a politician doesn't support the Green New Deal the logical next step is to ask them what their plan is to prevent climate genocide. If they don't have one they're complicit in climate genocide and that should disqualify them from public life.

7,408 [2:54 PM - Mar 10, 2019](#)

1,692 people are talking about this



[Ro Khanna](#) ✓ @RoKhanna

The young people with [@sunrisemvmt](#) are taking disruptive action because the stakes couldn't be any higher.

They understand that if we don't move forward with a bold, transformative plan to address climate change, they will suffer the consequences.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/feb/25/mitch-mcconnell-protest-young-climate-activists-green-new-deal>

543 [5:09 AM - Mar 11, 2019](#)

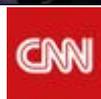


Hundreds of young protesters confront McConnell over Green New Deal

Activists condemn Republican Senate leader for 'lining your pockets while we die in floods' and demand climate action

[theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

164 people are talking about this



[CNN](https://twitter.com/CNN) @CNN

Former Rep. John Delaney on the Green New Deal: "We have to have a goal around climate that is realistic. ... If we actually think climate change is the existential issue of our time, then what we need to be doing is focusing on that" <https://cnn.it/2F177UJ>
#CNNTownHall

158 [10:55 AM - Mar 11, 2019](#)

106 people are talking about this



[Chris Van Hollen](#) ✓ [@ChrisVanHollen](#)

The Green New Deal has sparked a level of grassroots momentum that I believe will help us finally take real action, and I support the proposal as a first step toward tackling climate change.

14.4K [5:53 AM - Mar 9, 2019](#)

2,457 people are talking about this



[Prof Peter Strachan](#) [@ProfStrachan](#)

A very worthwhile read

The Good news about a [#GreenNewDeal](#)

"We don't need a technological miracle to solve this problem. The bottom line is we just need to deploy, deploy, deploy," says Mark Jacobson [@mzjacobson](#) [#EnergyTransition](#) [#Renewables](#) <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-good-news-about-a-green-new-deal>

157 [9:08 AM - Mar 10, 2019](#)



The Good News About a Green New Deal

Achieving anything close to zero emissions by mid-century would be a historic transformation for the U.S. economy. But rapidly advancing technology and the falling costs of clean energy make this...

[newyorker.com](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/opinion/green-new-deal.html)

106 people are talking about this



[Ro Khanna](#) ✓ @RoKhanna

Scientists tell us that we have 11 years left to take transformative action on climate change.

Economists tell us that we need to create jobs and grow the economy.

The Green New Deal is an aspirational vision that is needed to address both of these challenges.

2,956 [8:21 AM - Mar 9, 2019](#)

805 people are talking about this

The Guardian – 4 March 2019:

Adults failed to take climate action. Meet the young activists stepping up

“Some are calling climate change this generation’s civil rights movement. These are the young activists leading the charge”



Abdul El-Sayed ✓ @AbdulElSayed

What are the hottest years on record?

2015.
2016.
2017.
2018.

The last four years.

Climate change is real, climate change is immediate. It's time for the Green New Deal.

3,268 [1:28 AM - Mar 9, 2019](#)

757 people are talking about this

#ClimateStrike #SchoolStrike4Climate #GlobalSchoolStrike
#ClimateStrikeGeelong

Related on climatesafety.info

Global school strike: History in the making 6 March 2019

#ClimateStrikeAustralia: Students walk out of school 9 November 2018

Meet 2018's climate-oracle 17 December 2018

Previous Post: 15 March 2019: Striking for a safe climate