

COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

Community Protection Pledge: Taking action on extreme weather



Emergency Leaders
for Climate Action



CLIMATE
COUNCIL

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Community Protection Pledge: A toolkit for joining the campaign

Australians are facing disaster after disaster, and our elected representatives have a responsibility to protect their communities from worsening extreme weather.

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action have created this *Community Protection Pledge*, a list of 10 commitments that every elected Federal MP can sign up to, that will protect Australians now, and into the future.

Included in this toolkit is a breakdown of what the Community Protection Pledge is, why it's important, and how you can urge your MP to publicly commit to protecting your community, today.

Image: Townsville Floods. Andrew Rankin / Australian Associated Press.



WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action is a coalition of 33 former senior fire and emergency services leaders who came together in April 2019, to catalyse all levels of government to act on climate change. We are a project supported by the Climate Council, 100% independent, and funded by donations from community members.

OUR STORY

With more than a century of combined experience between us, we shaped the national conversation about climate change and extreme weather throughout the Black Summer bushfires, and are now working to ensure that fire and emergency services are equipped to protect Australian communities from increasingly frequent and damaging extreme weather events.

Image: ELCA members at a press conference in December 2019.



Who is this toolkit for?

This guide includes information about how to encourage Federal MPs to protect Australian communities from extreme weather, by signing onto our Community Protection Pledge.

Whether that's via email, in person, online, or even writing an op-ed to your local newspaper, this guide covers everything you need to know to contact your MP about the [*Community Protection Pledge*](#). Most importantly, it covers how to get the word out with your family, friends and networks.

If you are a part of a community group, such as a climate action network, school, surf club or rural fire brigade, **there are many ways you can get behind this campaign** and make it more powerful. Community groups are encouraged to widely share this tool with their communities, and get creative with ways they can spread awareness of the pledge within and across their networks.

If enough of us come together, we can get more people behind this important push, and one by one, **ask every Federal Member of Parliament to take the Pledge**, and commit to protecting their communities from extreme weather.

FAST FACTS - EXTREME WEATHER AND AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES:

- > Australia is exceptionally vulnerable to climate impacts: Australians are five times more likely to be displaced by a climate-fuelled disaster than someone living in Europe.
- > Climate change is driving more destructive heatwaves, downpours, cyclones, droughts, fires and other extreme weather events.
- > 2019-21 was an exceptionally intense period for climate-fuelled extreme weather, with heavy costs felt in Australia and around the world.
- > Climate change is increasing the severity and frequency of destructive extreme weather events - putting our lives, health, properties, livelihoods and natural wonders at greater risk.
- > The cost of extreme weather disasters has more than doubled since the 1970s, costing the Australian economy \$35 billion between 2010 and 2019.
- > Ignoring climate change is deadly. Australians are already paying the price for our failure to reduce emissions, and Governments must act faster to keep us safe.

Read more in Climate Council's report, [*Hitting Home: The Compounding Costs of Climate Inaction*](#)

The Community Protection Pledge explained

As an elected representative I take seriously my obligation to protect my community from worsening extreme weather and commit to supporting policies and using my voice to advocate for:

- 1 Addressing the root cause of the climate crisis and worsening extreme weather** by accelerating Australia's efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions need to plummet this decade, with net zero emissions achieved very soon thereafter. Action should be above politics - all parties should commit to a safer future.
.....
- 2 Urgently implementing all 80 recommendations of the Royal Commission** into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, including providing the necessary funding.
.....
- 3 Increasing funding for research into climate change and extreme weather**, including new and more detailed climate projections that better inform risk assessments and the impacts of such disasters on human health.
.....
- 4 Investing in communities so they are better prepared** when disasters strike and can recover more quickly; recognizing that preparedness saves lives and many dollars in avoided disaster recovery costs.
.....
- 5 Enhancing Australia's capabilities for responding to extreme weather disasters** in line with advice from State and Territory agencies. This includes better resourcing and coordination so that responses are swift, coordinated, and stop emergencies from escalating into disasters.
.....
- 6 Improving community engagement, education and support around extreme weather** so that individuals are better informed, prepared and empowered to act. This includes investing in adequate warning systems and locally-led initiatives such as community resilience hubs.
.....
- 7 Making rapid and comprehensive recovery from extreme weather events a priority** for all levels of government. This requires fast, evidence-based and transparent access to disaster recovery payments for survivors, so help gets to people on the ground quickly.
.....
- 8 Preparing Australian infrastructure, homes and community facilities, for extreme weather events.** This includes reforming planning and building standards and appropriate rebates or subsidies for retrofitting to ensure solutions are affordable to all.
.....
- 9 Involving health and family violence experts in disaster planning and response coordination** and ensuring adequate access to health services including mental health and family violence services, and access to telehealth for all those affected by disasters.
.....
- 10 Providing adequate funding to support the critical role of Local Governments in disaster preparedness and recovery**, so that they have the resources to build resilient communities.

Why a pledge?

The Black Summer bushfire season was the worst on record for New South Wales in terms of its intensity, the area burned, and the number of properties lost.¹ Following it, Emergency Leaders for Climate Action brought together 150 experts from around the country to discuss how Australia should respond to the growing risks of extreme weather disasters. Together, we developed the Australian Bushfire and Climate Plan.

Leaning on that collective wisdom, and 165 broad-ranging recommendations, we have come up with 10 commitments that every Federal MP can sign up to in order to protect Australians now, and into the future.

We are asking MPs to not just pay lip service to the need for action while extreme weather events are happening, but **consider the risk to their communities year round**. A pledge puts climate-fuelled extreme weather front of mind, and asks for a commitment that communities can hold their elected leaders accountable to.

Elected representatives owe it to their communities to do everything in their power to keep them safe. **If an MP won't sign the pledge, they need to tell their community why.**

WHO SHOULD SIGN THE PLEDGE?

This pledge is targeted at Australian Federal MPs.

All levels of government hold responsibility when it comes to extreme weather events, but **the Federal Government's leadership is needed on climate action and responding to the scale of the risk of extreme weather**. This was highlighted by the findings of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, with the majority of recommendations being directed to either the Federal Government, or jointly between the Federal and State Governments.

WHY ARE THERE 10 COMMITMENTS IN THE PLEDGE?

There are so many things that need to be done to protect communities from extreme weather events - as evidenced by the findings of this most recent Royal Commission and those before it.

We have pulled out 10 recommendations that speak to a range of extreme weather events experienced by Australian communities, and that are reasonable to demand of the Federal Government today.

¹ Summer of Crisis report, Climate Council March 2020

HOW CAN I SEE WHO HAS SIGNED THE PLEDGE?

Visit climc.nl/cppledge to use our Community Protection Pledge Tool. By entering your postcode into the “postcode” field under ‘Take Action’, your MP will be displayed, and you’ll be able to see whether they’ve signed or not.

HOW CAN I GET MY MP TO SIGN THE PLEDGE?

1. Visit climc.nl/cppledge
2. Click into the ‘Take Action’ tab.
3. Enter your postcode into the ‘postcode’ field & select ‘Find’.
4. Your local MP and their stance in relation to the pledge will appear, along with a corresponding email that will either thank your MP for already taking the Community Protection Pledge, or which could be the email that convinces them to.
5. From there, you can customise the email using information found in this guide, and by adding your own personal touches to the subject line and email body
6. Send it off to your MP by hitting the <Send your email> button.
7. Share the tool on social media to encourage your friends and family to ramp up the pressure for more MPs to sign!



ASK YOUR MP TO TAKE THE PLEDGE

Why should I take action?

You're more powerful than you think. Your voice, and the opinions you share, can carry real influence.

One of the ways we can encourage real action is to demonstrate that **there is a groundswell of vocal public support for our elected representatives to take action**, to protect our communities from extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change.

Whether you're speaking up as an individual, or taking action as a community group, our voices have power. The more people who speak up, the more powerful the call becomes.

We've put together a number of ways you can influence public debate and show that there is strong support for decisive action to protect Australian communities.



Email
your MP



Share
the tool



Call
your MP



Meet
your MP



Climate
Conversations

CONTACTING YOUR FEDERAL MP: TOP TIPS

Emailing or writing a letter to your MP



When writing an email or letter to your MP, it's best to keep it short and focus on one issue. This will maximise the impact of your message and help the message cut through. A lengthy message that covers lots of unrelated topics is more likely to be overlooked. In contrast; a concise and focused letter can be a powerful one. To help you craft an email to your MP, we've created a [Community Protection Pledge Tool](https://climc.nl/cppledge). Visit climc.nl/cppledge to find out whether your MP has signed the pledge, and send them a corresponding email.

SEND AN EMAIL TO YOUR FEDERAL MP NOW

Sharing with your networks



Sharing our Community Protection Pledge Tool online is a great way to continue the conversation and boost our campaign's reach. Imagine the impact if one MP were to receive hundreds, even thousands, of emails from their constituents – and the strong show of community support this represents.

Share our [Community Protection Pledge Tool](#) with your friends and family, ask them to check if their MP has signed to protect them.

Share this video featuring some of the Emergency Leaders on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.



Use our Facebook profile picture frame to spark the conversation amongst your friends online. Here's how:

- > In the Facebook app or on the desktop, click on your profile picture and select the option to 'Add Frame'
- > Search for 'ELCA Pledge' and select the frame created by the Climate Council, and add it to your profile picture
- > Add a caption to your image - something like this!



Australians are facing disaster after disaster, and our elected representatives have a responsibility to protect their communities from worsening extreme weather. So I've asked my MP to sign the Community Protection Pledge, to protect Australians from worsening extreme weather now, and into the future. You can do the same here: climc.nl/cppledge

#ProtectOurCommunity

Calling your MP



Follow up your email to your MP with a phone call asking them to sign the pledge, or thanking them for taking action to protect your community if they have signed. You can find your local MP and their contact details at aph.gov.au.

Top tips for calling your MP

> Before the call

- Learn about the MP and their position on climate change, including whether or not they have signed the Community Protection Pledge. Review your key messages and make notes about the points you want to make.

> During the call

- *Establish who you are:* let them know you're a constituent in their electorate and why you're calling. This makes them much more interested in your perspective, because they want your vote!
- *Be yourself:* it's important to be genuine - relax and speak from the heart
- *Use key messages:* it helps to be clear, concise and to the point - the below should help with this.
- *Tell your story:* talk about why it is important to you that they sign the Community Protection Pledge, or how extreme weather has made an impact on your life, whether from heatwaves, bushfires, floods or the choking smoke that filled the air during the summer of 2019 and 2020. This strengthens and personalises your call.
- *Be Respectful:* no matter the position of the MP, remember to be respectful to them and their staff. MP offices get hundreds of calls everyday and they respond best to constituents who are calm and clear.
- Visit climatecouncil.org.au/tips-for-calling-your-mp for more tips on calling your MP

5 key points to raise in a call to your MP

You will most likely only speak to a staff member - and that's okay! Just remember to be calm, patient and friendly, and ask that your feedback is passed on to the MP.

1. **Introduce yourself:** your name, where you live and that you're calling to discuss the Emergency Leaders for Climate Action's Community Protection Pledge.
2. If your MP has signed the pledge, let the person know you're calling to say thank you. **Explain why you care that your MP takes action on worsening extreme weather.** Ask that they encourage their colleagues in Parliament to do the same.
3. If your MP hasn't signed the pledge, identify that you emailed them asking them to sign with more information, **and ask why they haven't done so.**
4. **Explain why it's important to you that they sign the Pledge.** For example, are you experiencing difficulty during heatwaves? How did the bushfire smoke during the 2019/20 make you feel? Are you concerned about the escalating number and intensity of floods and fires we are experiencing?
5. **Ask that they consider signing the pledge,** and notify you if they make the decision to sign, or not to sign.

Meeting your MP



Meeting with your MP in person has the potential to make a huge impact. One way to do this is by attending one of their public consultation sessions or community events in your area - this is a time your local representative has set aside to listen to community concerns. MPs may also agree to meet one-on-one, or with representatives of community groups. Face to face meetings are a great way to ask questions of your MP, and to share your views and concerns.

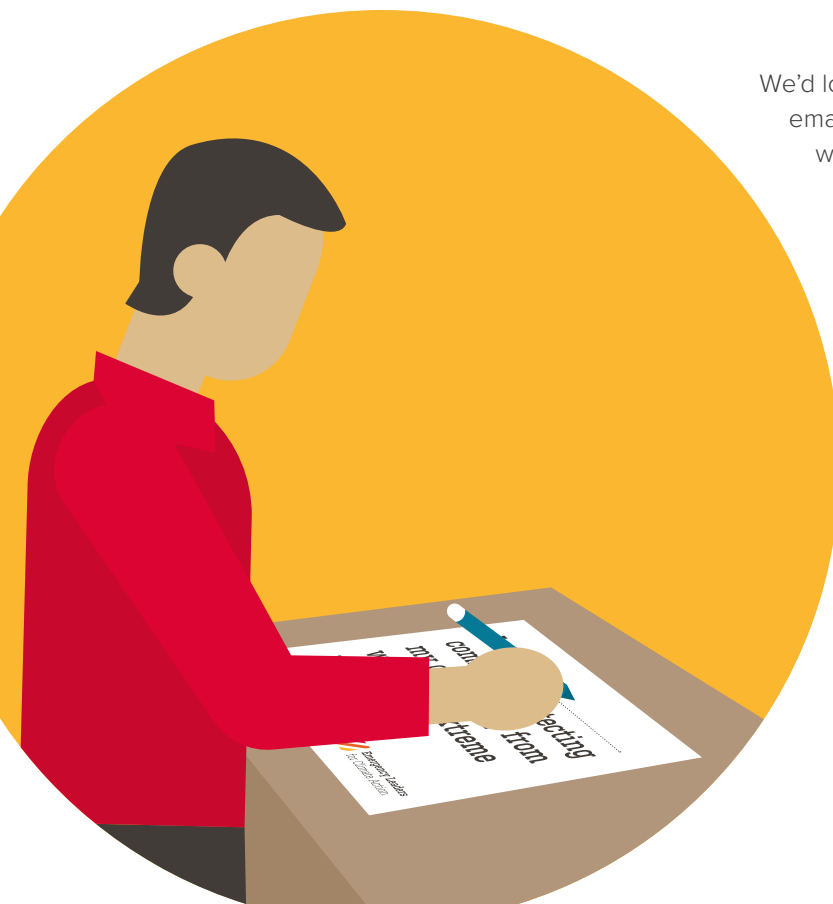
If you or your group are successful in securing a meeting, we may be able to assist you in preparing – contact us at info@emergencyleadersforclimateaction.org.au. In your email, be sure to let us know who your MP is, when you're meeting them, and that you'd like our help.

Encouraging your MP to sign - get creative!

Beyond emailing, calling and meeting with your MP - think of creative ways that might put pressure on them to sign. Brainstorm with friends, neighbours or your local network. Could you:

- > Organise a mass letter writing or calling party with other locals. Imagine if 100 people express how important the Pledge is to them!
- > Spread the word through local media - you could call in to local radio or write a letter to the editor of the local paper.
- > Find a public forum where your MP is speaking and organise to attend. During the Q and A section, prepare a question and ask your MP why they haven't signed the pledge.
- > Find other ways to tell your MP how you feel: chalk on the sidewalk? Photos of locals supporting the pledge on social media? The options are endless!

We'd love to see the creative ideas you come up with - email info@emergencyleadersforclimateaction.org.au with any photos or descriptions of what you've tried so we can share it with other community groups around the country.



Have a Climate Conversation with friends and family



One of the most significant ways you can contribute to encouraging action on climate change is by having conversations with family and friends. There is so much information out there, but people trust news coming through the people around them.

There are many ways to approach the topic of extreme weather and climate change and you will no doubt find that your audience, including friends and family, respond to different aspects of the problems we face in varying ways. It's important to remember that others might not know as much about the issue as you, and that meeting them where they're at is the best way to approach the conversation. No-one ever changed their mind because someone got angry at them for being ill-informed!



Here are some of our top tips for having climate conversations, and some resources to help guide them:

1. Make the problem relevant, concrete and local

- *Climate change is happening here and now, not just in the future.* It is important to show that climate change is happening today, and poses a real threat to our lives and livelihood that must be prioritised and dealt with now.
- *People not polar bears* - Focus on people, rather than the environment, emphasising climate change is an issue with immediate impacts for everyday Australians.
- *A local focus* - Research in Australia and the US shows that the larger an issue is, the less people feel a sense of responsibility for it. So it is more engaging to focus on local consequences, rather than those on a regional or global scale.

Extreme weather is a useful way to talk about the concrete consequences of a changing climate, as over half of Australians directly identify with having experienced these climate impacts.²

Example:

*"In a single year (2019), Australia recorded 33 days above 39 degrees – that's more than all such days recorded over the previous 60 years (1960-2018)."*³

² Climate Compass: Australian Audiences Segmentation, FiftyFive5 and The Sunrise Project August 2020

³ Hitting Home report, Climate Council 2021

Have a Climate Conversation with friends and family



2. Show that solutions are desirable, possible and inevitable

- *Focus on solutions available today* - renewable energy and battery storage technology are clean, affordable and reliable climate change solutions that are available now, and continue to be rolled out here in Australia and around the world.
- *Highlight the benefits of renewables and storage* - For example, benefits include local investment and jobs, cutting household and business power bills, creating new industries, modernising the power system, improving health and supporting regional communities.
- *Show examples of the transition already underway*

Example:

“In the past, we needed a balance of fossil fuels and renewables to power the country. Over the past decade, renewable technology has rapidly improved and the cost of batteries has dropped 90%, so we can now use renewables 24/7. The ACT and Tasmania are regularly powered by 100% renewable energy.”⁴



Have a Climate Conversation with friends and family



3. Read our conversation guides to help prepare!

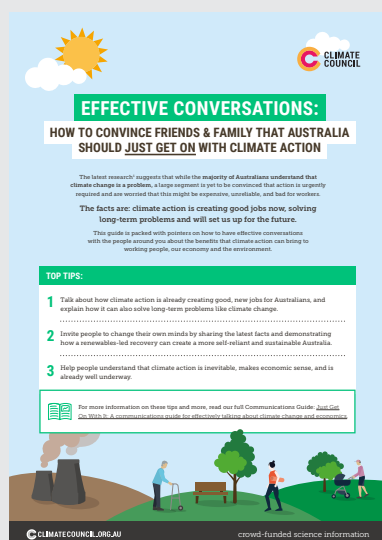
Visit climatecouncil.org.au/resources/climate-conversation-guides to view these guides.



Bushfires & Climate Change



Explaining Climate & Weather



Effective Conversations with Family & Friends



Time to Act

Power Climate Action

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action is a project supported by the Climate Council. As an independent organisation, we rely on community donations to power our push for urgent climate action to protect Australian communities.

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS BY CHIPPING IN A DONATION TODAY

More Information & Resources

MY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE WON'T RESPOND TO ME - WHAT NOW?

If you've just sent your email, sit tight. Hopefully, your MP is receiving tons of requests to take the Community Protection pledge, and will get back to you shortly.

Until then, we'll be updating which MPs have signed the [Community Protection Pledge](#), so be sure to check back regularly, or [subscribe to updates from ELCA and the Climate Council](#) to find out when your MP takes the pledge.

If your MP doesn't respond to your email in a reasonable time period, follow up! We recommend emailing them again, or calling them, and requesting a response as to why they won't sign the Community Protection Pledge.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE RESOURCES?

More information about Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, and the Climate Council can be found on our websites, and social media.



[Emergency Leaders for Climate Action](#)



[Facebook](#)



[Climate Council](#)



[Twitter](#)



[Instagram](#)

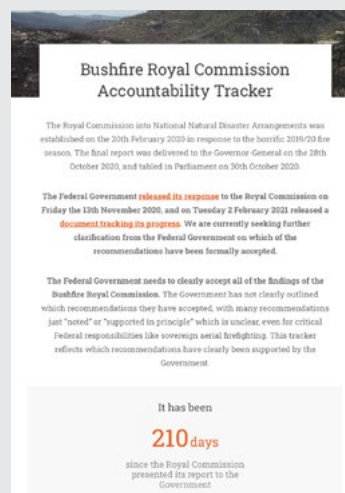


[Youtube](#)

FURTHER READING



Australian Bushfire
and Climate Plan



Bushfire Royal Commission:
Accountability Tracker



National Bushfire and Climate
Summit - June 2020



Dangerous
Summer Report

Contact Us

If you have any further questions about the pledge email ELCA at:

 info@emergencyleadersforclimateaction.org.au