



We Can Do It!

A Guide to Raising Support for the Climate Protection Bill

This is a guide to the many ways you can support the Climate Protection Bill that will be delivered to Parliament House, Canberra, on September 21, 2008 by thousands of cyclists from all over Australia.

The Climate Protection Bill has been written collaboratively by Australian community groups concerned about climate change. If implemented into legislation, the Climate Protection Bill would provide comprehensive solutions to stem Australia's spiraling greenhouse gas emissions, build a clean energy future, and protect those who will be most affected by this transition.

This guide has two parts:

- About the Climate Protection Bill (a backgrounder)
- Action to Promote the Climate Protection Bill

1. About the Climate Protection Bill

Inspiration for an Australian Climate Protection Bill

Before the 2005 United Kingdom election, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland and WWF -UK (formerly Worldwide Fund for Nature) developed a draft Bill calling for the UK's greenhouse gas emissions to be 20% below the 1990 level by 2010 and decreasing at 3% each year until 2050. It called for the Prime Minister to develop a strategy to reduce emissions and report annually to Parliament on the progress of these cuts. If emissions exceeded the target by more than 10%, the Climate Change Bill proposed that the Prime Minister and relevant Department Secretary have their salary reduced by the same percentage.

The UK Bill was initially signed as an 'Early Day Motion' (similar to a Private Member's Bill in Australia) by three MPs. Local climate groups lobbied their own MPs to sign their support for the Climate Change Bill in the lead-up to the 2005 UK election. 130,000 people contacted their local MP, and 400 MPs voted for the Climate Change Bill. This led to the announcement in March 2007 by the UK Government of a draft Climate Change Bill that mandates greenhouse gas emission reductions of up to 32 % by 2020 and 60% by 2050 on 1990 levels. The UK Climate Change Bill is expected to pass into legislation by September 2008.

The Australian Bill's Progress so far...

Inspired by the success of UK community members and the introduction of a climate Bill into the UK parliament, members of Climate Action Coogee, a community-based climate group based in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, began to formulate and draft an Australian Climate Protection Bill.

To add further weight to the Climate Protection Bill, the Coogee group sought collaboration with community-based climate groups around Australia until consensus was reached on several contentious issues. The Climate Protection Bill was written with the aim of addressing the causes of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and proposes workable solutions to stem these emissions and protect people and communities who will be affected by these changes. The quality of the Climate Protection Bill has been assured through the involvement of environmental lawyers and policy experts, and peer review from several academics working on energy policy.

In the lead-up to the 2007 Federal Election, over 65 community-based groups endorsed the Climate Protection Bill, representing over 6,000 Australians. Many of these groups approached their local parliamentarians to support the Climate Protection Bill. Several community-based groups in the New England electorate successfully lobbied Tony Windsor MP to take on the Climate Protection Bill. Mr Windsor is currently drafting a version of the Climate Protection Bill to introduce as a Private Members Bill in late 2008.

Supporters of the Climate Protection Bill decided to continue to promote the Climate Protection Bill beyond Tony Windsor's involvement to ensure that other politicians consider the community's demands represented in the Climate Protection Bill. To do this, they have organised another ambitious and exciting strategy – to get thousands of postcards signed in support of the Climate Protection Bill from around the country and to plan a bike ride from Sydney to Canberra to bring the postcards to Parliament House when parliament is sitting in September 2008.

This plan has evolved and expanded so that supporters of the Climate Protection Bill are now working to get 15,000 postcards signed with support from the online petition organisation, GetUp, and organising a mass convergence in Canberra so the bike riders with postcards will arrive at the same time as the GetUp Torch Relay on September 21, 2008, with both movements supporting the introduction of the Climate Protection Bill.

The Climate Protection Bill was revised in late June, 2008 to incorporate recent research findings on the emissions reductions required to prevent dangerous climate change. It has been re-endorsed by many of the groups who originally authored the Climate Protection Bill.

Is the Climate Protection Bill Feasible?

One issue that is under current debate centres around the level of emissions reduction targets that Australia should set. The scientific recommendations are constantly being upgraded as further research findings become available. The Climate Protection Bill calls for targets of 50% below 1990 emission levels by 2020, and 100% below 1990 emission levels by 2040. These targets are supported by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and GetUp.

Research earlier this year from McKinsey & Company consultants found that Australia could reduce its emissions to 30% below 1990 levels by 2020 without major technological breakthroughs or lifestyle changes. These reductions can be achieved using existing approaches and by deploying mature or rapidly developing technologies to improve the carbon efficiency of our economy. With additional effort, Australians supporting the Climate Protection Bill consider that the emissions could be reduced to 50% below 1990 levels by 2020.

Furthermore, the scientific findings also support high targets. In 2007, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published scenarios that proposed Annex 1 countries (including Australia) should reduce emissions by 25-40% by 2020 to ensure warming remains between 2 and 2.4°C. The research on which these targets are based was completed in 2005. Many of the authors of the Climate Protection Bill consider that 50% cuts in 1990 levels by 2020 better reflect the recent scientific findings regarding observed temperature, sea-level and emissions increases.

The Climate Protection Bill is not supposed to be the 'silver bullet' answer to all our problems. But it is a really good start and we are hoping you will use it as a tool to lobby your politicians. It could be amazingly powerful if all the community-based climate groups around Australia lobbied their parliamentarians to support the Climate Protection Bill because we would be speaking out with one voice about the solutions we want our federal politicians to implement!

Read an overview of the Climate Protection Bill here:

www.climatemovement.org.au/climateprotectionbill

Read the full text of the Climate Protection Bill here:

www.climatemovement.org.au/climateprotectionbill

2. Actions to Promote the Climate Protection Bill

Action List for CAGs to Promote the Climate Protection Bill

From July to September 2008, community-based climate groups can support and promote the Climate Protection Bill by:

- Endorsing the Climate Protection Bill online at www.climatemovement.org.au/climateprotectionbill.
- Organising individuals to sign postcards in support of the Climate Protection Bill.
- Meeting with their local MP to encourage her/him to support the Climate Protection Bill when it is introduced to Parliament.
- Achieving local media coverage about the Climate Protection Bill and the strong community support for it.
- Seeking endorsement of the Climate Protection Bill from other community-based groups.
- Hosting the GetUp Climate Torch in the community with a forum and event (www.getup.org.au).
- Helping organise or joining the Cycle 4 Climate Protection or coming to Canberra on September 21st for the delivery of the Climate Protection Bill and torch to Parliament House (www.climateride.org.au)

After September 2008, groups can support and promote the Climate Protection Bill by:

- Continuing to secure media attention on the Private Member's Bill that introduces the Climate Protection Bill (once this has occurred).
- Contacting Tony Windsor MP and asking him to introduce the Bill to Parliament (if this has not occurred).
- Lobbying their local MP to vote in favour of the Climate Protection Bill when it is introduced to parliament.

Lobbying Strategy

Politicians admit that the best way to make a serious impression on them about an issue that concerns you is to meet with them in person.

We recommend that you make the effort to meet with your Federal MP in person. There are guidelines for how to do this below. If you really cannot meet with them, listed below in order of effectiveness are ways to make your concerns known:

1. Make a telephone appointment and speak to your MP on the phone
2. Send a personalised paper letter
3. Send a personalised email
4. Send a text message from your mobile phone

When you meet with your MP, take the Climate Protection Bill with you and be clear and firm that you want them to support it. Send it to them beforehand so they can read it before your meeting. If they don't have time to go through it with you at your first meeting, arrange a follow-up appointment with them at your first meeting so as to discuss the Bill once they have considered it.

If you are involved with a community group, lobby as both an individual and as a member of the group. Make sure your MP knows how many people are in your group (i.e. the number of people you represent). Distribute the Climate Protection Bill and this manual throughout your community and to your friends and family. Promote the Bill through local or national media, for example on radio stations, newspapers, websites, magazines or any other form you have access to!

How to find your electorate and federal MP

An electorate is the area represented in Federal Parliament by a Member of Parliament (MP) who is voted in by the local residents. It often encompasses several suburbs. To find the name of your electorate, visit the website: www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Electoral_DPM/index.htm and type in your suburb or postcode. Click on the electorate name (in your state) and you will find details about the boundaries of the electorate and the name of the current MP for that electorate. If you are still unsure, there's a link to a map of the electorates here: www.aec.gov.au/Electorates/Electoral_DPM/Electorates_by_State.htm

How to organise a meeting with your MP (or other candidates)

When organising the meeting with your MP, you may find you need to maintain a 'friendly persistence', and make several phone calls and send several letters and email. Here is a suggested strategy:

1. Send them a paper letter, requesting a meeting;
2. If you don't get a response with a commitment to a meeting, follow this up by phone;
3. If you still haven't heard about a date from them, follow up by email;
4. Maintain a constant pressure by phone and email on at least a weekly basis.

Hints:

- In your first phone call, try to find out the name of the person and email address who will organise your meeting. That way, you can send emails directly to them, and ask for them when you phone. Also make sure you know the politician's perspective on this matter.
- If you are having difficulty scheduling a meeting, try approaching the politician directly, if you know of an event they will be attending.
- Don't give up! Remember that your MP represents you – you're a voter with a specific concern and you have a right to express that in person to your MP.

You can find more information in this document from the Australian Conservation Foundation:

www.acfonline.org.au/uploads/res_communityclimatekit.pdf

PS: If a member of your group is affiliated with a political party, consider carefully whether it would be valuable or detrimental to include them in the meeting with your MP.

Take a signed petition!

If your group often has information stalls, print off some petitions (available from http://climatemovement.org.au/component/option,com_fabrik/Itemid,418/) for community members to sign their support for the Climate Protection Bill. Take these petitions to your MP when you meet, or post them to their electorate office.

Media releases

If you have had a meeting with your MP about the Climate Protection Bill, or even if you have just collected signatures on the petition sheets, it's a great idea to publicise to your local media that your community is actively supporting the Climate Protection Bill.

How to write a media release

The easiest media to access is the local newspaper.

1. Write the release yourself in the style of the newspaper.
2. Include a catchy heading.
3. Use mainly quotes from local people and keep them to about 25 words.
4. Most of your sentences should be direct quotes.
5. Include a photo with a caption and the names of the people in the photo.
6. Include your contact details - phone and email address.
7. Ring the newspaper before you send it and ask to speak to the journalist who writes environmental or community stories.
8. Pitch your story to them and ask the best way to send them your story. Ideally, send it by email.
9. After you have sent it, ring the journalist again to ask if they have received the story and photo.
10. Ask when they think it might be published. Be helpful, and encourage them to contact you if they need further information or for follow-up stories.
11. If all goes well, consider writing another story with a slightly different angle.

Hints: Don't use alienating language. Maintain a positive, solutions-based message rather than "doom and gloom". Try for an angle about 'local people who have a concern and are doing something positive about it'. Mention other similar groups around Australia and include the global importance of your activities.

For more extensive media advice and training see this Media Handbook:

www.nccnsw.org.au/communitytoolbox

How to find local media

The Big Switch website has a database of local media that you can search by postcode, go to: www.thebigswitch.org.au/index.cfm?page=media.list

If you can't find what you're looking for, you may have to research this issue yourself. Your local council will probably have a media officer that may be able to give you a list of local media.

Good Luck!! And see you in Canberra on September 21st!

Prepared by members of Climate Action Coogee, June 2008

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