Women’s Climate Congress

1 What do we mean by ‘climate balance’?

Vision

Our vision statement says we aspire to ‘restore climate balance by 2030’. This information paper clarifies what we mean by ‘climate balance’ and provides some criteria by which to judge our progress.

Values and approach

Three of our values statements are of particular relevance:

- As beneficiaries of the industrial age, we acknowledge our responsibility for the present situation with grateful hearts and with lament.
- Weary of conflict and polarisation, we resist judgment and blame, embrace uncertainty and encourage mediation and collaboration for a safe passage from climate chaos to climate survival.
- Listening deeply to the science, we recognise the interconnections of Earth systems and human influences within those systems. With this in mind, we bring our collective imagination to uncover innovative, equitable and sustainable ways forward.

What is ‘climate balance’?

Climate balance will be achieved when we

- Reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050
- Limit global warming to below 1.5°C degrees

To achieve and maintain climate balance for ourselves and future generations we need our government to

- Develop ongoing climate risk mitigation strategies based on the best available scientific assessment and knowledge
- Adopt new economic models that support the transition to sustainable development

Reduce carbon emissions

‘Climate balance’ means carbon emissions are trending downward in a way that ensures the IPCC target of zero emissions by 2050 will be met.

The 2018 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Special Report says that to avoid catastrophic climate change, global carbon emissions must be reduced by about 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, and reach ‘net zero’ by 2050.

Limit global warming

‘Climate balance’ means we can be confident that global warming will remain below 1.5°C.

The Paris Accord was based on advice available in 2015 that to maintain a safe climate and avoid unpredictable tipping points leading to catastrophic climate outcomes, global warming must remain below 1.5 °C degrees. Australia’s target under the accord is for 26-28% reduction below 2005 levels by 2030 (including land use, land-use change, and forestry).
However, the more recent 2018 IPCC Special Report (see above) cautions that, to be confident that this global limit will be achieved, faster reductions are now needed by 2030 and zero emissions reached by 2050.

**Develop strategies based on scientific assessment and knowledge**

‘Climate balance’ means governments and climate scientists working collaboratively to categorise risks and make appropriate technological and economic changes to ensure we stay within safe limits for carbon emissions and global warming.

To effectively categorise risks, there needs to be trust in the scientific process and respect for the advice of scientists. This does not rule out being alert to new information and interpretation but unless robust new evidence emerges, the best current assessment should guide policy. Scientists have assessed that to meet the carbon emissions and global warming targets mentioned above, we must stay within a finite ‘carbon budget’ (i.e., the amount of carbon that can be released to the atmosphere to stay within a safe limit). To achieve this, the IPCC has reported that we need to leave the Earth’s remaining fossil fuels in the ground, and phase out the use of supplies from existing sources as fast as possible.

**Adopt new economic models**

‘Climate balance’ means adopting economic models that prioritise nurture of life and care for the Earth, and ensure financial security, dignity, equity and justice for all peoples.

To meet the IPCC and Paris targets, we must transition away from energy production and consumption patterns that have served us well for generations. Our current economic paradigm reinforces these old patterns and does not value environmental processes, unpaid work or a range of other social services. Meanwhile, Earth system science has identified social equity as a factor influencing the Earth system alongside other biophysical factors. New approaches are needed to realign economic models with the true value of environmental and human services and to promote a fair distribution of resources among all citizens.

In relation to energy production in Australia, this means creating a policy environment to provide maximum support for the renewable energy industry. It also means showing our gratitude for workers made redundant by the ongoing closure of fossil fuel industries, and providing generous income support, retraining and community reorientation to help them transition to new jobs and lifestyles.

**Actions to bring about the changes the world needs**

**Political level**

Engage with all political parties/representatives. Look for common ground. Identify roadblocks and seek deeper conversations about the issues/what is going on. Be authentic. Stand firm in our proprietary right to protect the children.

Firmly and respectfully reinforce the science in discussions with decision makers (in the same way as the school strikers have done). Focus on what must happen: ‘Will this action reduce emissions?’ ‘How?’ ‘How will this approach provide a safe future for the children with less than 1.5°C warming?’

Propose and support new methods of community engagement to overcome current polarisation (see our information sheet #XX on mediation).

Support measures that are in line with the WCC vision, such as the Climate Change Bill proposed by Independent MP Zali Steggall.
Reinforce and affirm government actions that move the political culture towards more collaboration, respect for the science, and actions to restore climate balance. (see our information sheet #XX on economics).

Community level
Reach out to those not currently engaged with issue of climate change, or who are opposed to change (eg because of involvement in the fossil fuel industry). Hold conversations and form relationships around common issues – care for families, children, community.

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