

Open Letter to the Australian Delegates attending COP 27 on behalf of South Australia's children and young people.



It is of vital importance to us, the generation of young people whose future will be most impacted by climate change, that Australia commits to taking significant action on climate change at COP 27.

As children and young people, we are particularly vulnerable to climate change, despite being least responsible for it. Climate Change impacts on our rights and is a direct threat to our future. Frustratingly it is also a problem that is 'beyond our direct sphere of influence'.

We have grown up listening to climate scientists telling us that we have reached a global 'climate emergency' and that we are now facing a 'climate disaster'. If we want to have a future, let alone one that resembles anything like the one you experienced in your childhood, inaction on climate change is no longer an option for any of us. We cannot understand how the expert evidence made available by climate experts could be misunderstood or ignored for so long.

Regardless of where we live, on the media and digital channels that we tune into, we are regularly exposed to news reports, stories, images, and video footage showing increased levels of air pollution, rising sea levels, extreme weather events and examples of the loss of biodiversity that is occurring at a rapid rate across the globe.



In South Australia, some of us live in communities that have been directly affected by bushfire, drought, flood, storms, heatwaves, and other extreme weather events. This has left some of us traumatised and many of us extremely concerned and anxious about what comes next.

Key to our concern is the impact we see climate change having on equality and justice. We have discussed issues relating to climate change in the context of poverty, health, education, and transport. We recognise the impacts climate change is having on heightening social and economic inequalities and see how it is disproportionately affecting those who have the least resources to respond.



We see continued lack of action as a lack of respect and consideration for the wellbeing and interests of present and future generations of all people, but particularly children and young people. We feel invisible, ignored, and 'cut off' from decision-making at school, in our community, and across government.

We want to understand the systems we live in and acquire the skills we need to transition into adulthood by actively engaging with the world around us. While some of us attend schools where we are being supported to engage in enriching climate change education, and climate action opportunities, we know of other schools where there are teachers 'who still don't believe in climate change' or who are not willing or comfortable to engage in conversations with us about issues related to climate change. We want to know what action is being taken at a local, state, national and global level to provide us with hope and optimism.

This silence has negative impacts on our wellbeing and on our willingness to engage with what we are learning in school. We lose confidence in our teachers and worry more about our future because we see adults who no longer can be trusted to teach us what we need to know or do what is required.

Knowing about and involving us in climate action would help alleviate some of this stress as would setting more ambitious emissions reduction targets and taking urgent action that ensures we move away from our dependence on fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

We have identified important opportunities for change that can be made at the local level across schools and the community. These are as follows:

- Provide us with consistent education and a targeted curriculum on climate change from a younger age.
- Give us more opportunities to become involved in community awareness raising about climate change actions and issues.
- Make sure our schools have proper bins for waste management and that recycling is normalised.
- Provide us with a genuine stake in climate action by normalising youth involvement in climate decision making so that we build the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours we need to meet the mitigation and adaptation targets that must be set.

