

STEP IN TO STEP IT UP ON CLIMATE CHANGE



A KIT TO STEP-IN TO YOUR
FEDERAL MEMBER'S OFFICE

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INTRODUCTION

December is going to be a big month. It marks the beginning of the twelvemonth countdown to the Copenhagen climate talks at the end of next year – the last chance the global community has to agree on binding policies to avert catastrophic climate change. It will also see the public release of the draft of the most important policy in contemporary Australia.

In July, the Federal Government released a Green Paper (a policy scoping document) about their Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme – the central plank in Australia's emissions reduction strategy. It was widely criticised as too generous to polluting industries. Likewise, the carbon emissions reduction trajectories recommended by Professor Ross Garnaut were weak and defeatist.

Both of these policies are going to be finalised in November and announced in December. To have a hope of influencing them, we must work together.

We must not be caught unawares, but must act together to show the Government that the community wants more ambitious, more just and more hopeful action than is being contemplated.

This kit contains information to help you take part in this exciting community project.



FIRST STEP:

LET YOUR MEMBER KNOW

What you need to do

In the next week, ring or write to your local Federal member and ask to meet with them to discuss the CPRS and emissions reductions. You can do this as a member of a group, or as an individual.

Make sure you get a meeting before the end of November – the earlier the better – say it is urgent because you know the White Paper and emissions reduction target announcements are being made in early December.

Finding and contacting your local member

If you're not sure who your MP is, you can find out via the Australian Electoral Commission: <http://apps.aec.gov.au/eseach/> or phone 132 326. Once you know your electorate, you can find contact details for your MP at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/mi-elctr.asp>

Phone the MP's office, ask to talk to the diary secretary, and make an appointment for a meeting. You will need to explain clearly that you are a local constituent who wants to see the MP about Australia's response to climate change. They may ask you to write a letter to formally ask for an appointment. Let them know that you believe it is urgent because you know the White Paper and emissions reduction target announcements are being made in early December.

Get the letter off quickly if it seems like it will help.

According to ACF, for a politician a personal phone call is worth a hundred emails and a personal face to face visit is worth a hundred calls.

Prepare for your meeting

If you successfully get a meeting, do a little preparation so you know what you will say. Find out about your MP and what motivates them. Look up their personal web page, check their biography on the parliamentary website, and keep an eye in your local papers for their media statements.

The Step-in to Step it Up national action project is focused on two central demands that your local member and Federal Government need to deliver by December:

- 1. Make a commitment that 2010 will be our peak carbon year**
- 2. Ditch the concessions to the emissions-intensive industries in the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.**

The reason we chose these is because they are measurable now – failing to do these two things by December will show that the Federal Government is not serious about urgent action on climate change.

Call on your Federal member to make the Government announce in December that 2010 will be Australia's peak carbon emitting year, and emissions will decline from then on. Call on them to ditch the generous concessions offered to emissions-intensive industries in the Green Paper, to ensure rapid decline of emissions and maximum investment in alternative industries.

The ACF has terrific tips on having a successful meeting on their website: http://www.acfonline.org.au/default.asp?section_id=270

Let your local media outlets and networks you are involved in know that this is what you expect from your local member.

Feedback to the climate movement

If your local member won't give you a meeting before the end of November or if they give you any answers at the meeting, make sure you let the rest of us know.

It will be easier to generate the political will for change if the politicians know we are working together and monitoring their performance. We will be setting up a spreadsheet of local members on the climatemovement.org collaboration space detailing the response of each local member.

SECOND STEP: STEP IT UP

Some time during the first two weeks of December, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme White Paper will be released and the interim emissions reduction targets announced.

If the Federal Government doesn't commit to both of our key asks at that time, it's time to step it up. **Step back into your local member's office to let them know that you are outraged.**



Brisbane residents stage a 'sit in' in Kevin Rudd's electoral office in September 2008.



Rising Tide takes the coal message to NSW ALP headquarters in Sussex Street.

If we all do this in the same week after this announcement it will generate political will to adopt the policies we need. Your local member will be embarrassed to have to defend policies the community rejects – they will go to the party room and complain that the policy isn't good enough.

You have been and tried to get them to change. They need to know that there are repercussions for failing to make the right policy decisions. We only have twelve months left to turn around our emissions. **The task ahead is so hard: politicians just won't do it unless they know there will be protests and backlash if they fail to act.**

Your step in action could be:

- Standing out the front of their office with placards handing out flyers to passersby
- Sending in a delegation of mums and dads with letter or petition to Kevin Rudd and Penny Wong demanding a peak carbon by 2010 commitment.
- Piling into their office with your prams, puppets, banners, friends and families and demanding to see them again to tell them how disappointed you are.
- "Sitting-in" on the floor or in the reception area and refusing to leave until the peak carbon promise is delivered (this will require you to think about how you will respond to the police.)
- Taking a chain and padlock with you and attaching yourself to their door to show them how seriously you take this issue.

Remember: we will all be doing it in the same week – you are not alone.

HOW CAN WE STEP IT UP AND SEND THE RIGHT MESSAGE?

Firstly, we don't want to alienate our friends and family, but we do want to send a strong enough message that will make your member "sit up and think" – they won't want to be seen as not doing their best on climate change, so think about the best way to "step-in" to their office that will both rattle them, and gain the support of your community – you will be amazed at how supportive they will be of your protest as long as they understand why you're doing it.

You will need:

Flyers: if you're standing out the front of your local member's office and passersby want to know what you're doing, it's great to be able to hand them some information. Make a flyer that includes your key demands, contact details, and is visually interesting and print it off. If you would like help with this, contact hollycreenaune@gmail.com

A Media Release: It's a good idea to send out a media release so that word gets out about what you have done. Don't send it until you know your action plan has worked though. Sometimes it's useful for one of your group to remain behind at home or work to send it for you. See the media tips in this guide for useful contacts, and a media release template.

Cameras: make sure you take great photos and footage of yourselves that you can share with your networks and the media. For media quality images, make sure you get clear shots of you banner, lots of people and a bit of dynamic action.

Banners: More than one is preferable. Make them as beautiful and clear as you can, with a straightforward statement of your message (like "no new coal" or "peak carbon by 2010" or something)

A reason to be there: Think beforehand about why you are going. Have you written to and visited your member before? Do you want to deliver a letter signed by lots of people? Do you want to ask them to do something? (Like to make representations on your behalf to the Prime Minister, or pass on a letter)

A plan: There are some options over the page, but think about how and what you will do. Do you want to all go in together? Leave politely when asked? Wait for the police to arrive and be removed by them? Wait until your member promises something and then leave? Just stand out the front leafleting? It is important to be clear beforehand about the circumstances under which you will end the action and to know who is taking on what roles. (See next page.)



MAKING A PLAN!

1. Check out the office beforehand. Does it have a foyer you can sit in? Perhaps there is a door you can block? Think about whether there are other people's offices that would need to use the door or foyer.
2. Designate roles: elect someone to speak to the reception and other staff on your behalf and then let that person do the job. Elect someone else to speak to the media. Elect someone to speak to police. Try and avoid letting multiple other members of the group speak to these people, as it will create confusion.
3. Walk into the office together, take your banners, papier mache props, photos and flyers.
4. Tell the reception staff who you are and why you are there.
5. Sit down on the floor together. Perhaps you could start singing, or reading from a prepared statement.
6. You could ring the police – someone is going to call them anyway, and it might as well be you.
7. Send your media release. Is there someone in an office or at home somewhere that you can organise to wait for your alert to send out the media release? If you're feeling cheeky, you could even use the politician's fax machine!
8. The media liaison person can then start calling the media.
9. Use nonviolent non-cooperation techniques to stay as long as you can. Some of these – and lots of other great training material – can be found in the Nonviolence Trainers Resource Manual at www.nonviolence.org
10. Make sure you take great pictures of yourselves and record what's happening. (Don't be pushy about this though... keep a respectful distance from individuals)
11. If you're committed and ready, you could use locking devices to make it harder for the police to remove you from the office. It is not necessary to do this to have a successful sit-in, look at the lunch counter sit-ins during the civil rights movement – but it can make the event last much longer and secure more media coverage. It is likely to result in the arrest of the person who locks themselves on, but on relatively minor charges. See elsewhere in this kit for legal tips.
12. Know when you are going to leave, and how. Afterwards, make sure you get together and talk about how the sit-in went. Did you get your message across? Did everybody feel involved and empowered? What was good? What could be better next time?

WHAT IF I WANT TO 'SIT-IN' LIKE THE CIVIL RIGHTS CAMPAIGNERS?

Last year, Al Gore said, "I can't understand why there aren't rings of people blocking bulldozers, and preventing them from constructing coal-fired power plants."

Dr. James Hansen, the top climate scientist at NASA said, "It seems to me that young people, especially, should be doing whatever is necessary to block construction of dirty coal-fired power plants."

Our climate, and indeed the very fate of the planet, is at a crossroads. Polluting industries are sending our futures straight to their hip pockets, while politicians stand blindly beside them advocating weak and disastrous targets. Climate change is here, has happened, and is continuing to happen on our watch. **This is the last year that we will have any chance to prevent runaway climate change. Let's sit down, stand up for climate justice, and rewrite history.**

What is a 'sit-in' and what does it achieve?

Sit-ins have been used as a powerful form of civil resistance across some of the greatest social movements of our time...

Perhaps the most well-known use of sit-ins is in the American Civil Rights movement. Sit-ins as a tactic began on February 1, 1960, when four black students now known as the "Greensborough Four" dressed in their Sunday best and sat down at the lunch counter of a local convenience store. The lunch counter was segregated for "whites only" so the Greensborough Four were refused service, however they remained seated, nonviolent & respectful.

Tips from ACT UP Civil Disobedience Manual:

- Your objectives must be reasonable. You must be able to communicate this to the people in the office.
- Maintain as much eye contact as possible.
- Make no abrupt gestures. Move slowly. When practical, tell the people there what you are going to do before you do it. Don't say anything threatening, critical, or hostile.
- Don't be afraid of stating the obvious.
- Seek to befriend your opponent's better nature; even the most brutal and brutalised among us have some spark of decency that the nonviolent defender can reach.



SOME GREAT ADVICE

Brief legal information

Different types of actions can have different legal issues and consequences. Most charges laid at protest actions are relatively minor. Some of the most common charges arising from protest activities include obstruction of a police officer, obstruction of a road, and trespass.

As constituents, you have a right to enter your MP's office. If you choose to remain for an extended period of time, staff may ask you to leave. If you fail to leave, you may be committing the offence of trespass. If you are charged and go to court, the penalty is usually a small fine.

It is important in planning to consider that certain conduct may put people in a position where they are liable to be arrested, which may in turn result in criminal charges, court processes and potentially a criminal record. People should decide beforehand whether they wish to take this risk. Once charged, it is important to seek legal advice at the earliest opportunity.

Being arrested: Police are not required to give you a warning prior to arresting you, but many times they will. Police must formally tell you they are arresting you.

Name and address: Police have the right to ask for your name and address if they reasonably believe that you have committed, or are about to commit any offence, or you may be able to assist in the investigation of an indictable (serious) offence.

Answering police questions: Apart from name and address, you have the right to refuse to answer any other questions. You can say 'no comment' or 'on legal advice I have no comment to make'. Practice this & be prepared to be repetitive. There are no off the record conversations.

For more information, see www.activistrights.org.au. You can also contact a lawyer, Community Legal Centre or the NSW Environmental Defenders office.

Get creative!

Skits, creative stunts and costumes will help to communicate your message and keep the group entertained and active, and keep morale high. You could do these once you get inside for something to do, or outside as street theatre for the public. Some ideas for creative stunts and themes are as follows.

Disco theme: 'Stayin' Alive' - We are trying to stay alive by demanding a safe climate future. Don 70's gear, bring a disco-ball and a boom box, have a dance and look a little silly while you let your MP know you are serious about climate action.

Game show theme - Climate change is not a game but our politicians are treating it like one! Why not treat your MP like the guest on a game show?

- Deal or No Deal- the community say 'No Deal' to weak targets that will do nothing to secure the safe climate future that we deserve. Will your MP take the deal of 25% reductions by 2020? Or will s/he say 'No Deal' to this disastrous figure that locks us into dangerous climate change?

- Sale of the Century - our government is selling out the next century and all those to come by proposing such weak targets.

Emergency! Fluoro vests, flashing lights and sirens, sandbags- it's a climate emergency and your group have come to save the day by demanding real action from your MP. You could sandbag their office to protect it from rising sea levels that the governments' targets are doing nothing to save us from.

Funeral theme. Your group could have a funeral for the Great Barrier Reef, which is guaranteed to perish under the governments' proposed targets. Black clothing, veils, flowers and elaborate pantomime can communicate this tragedy. You could even deliver a eulogy stating what an asset the Reef was to Australia and the world- including a mention of the tourist dollars the reef brings in!

Using time - You could stay in the office, be silent, or sit down for 12 minutes (that's how many months we have left until Copenhagen) or 350 minutes. (350 is the number of the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide -measured in 'Parts Per Million' in our atmosphere.)

Brisbane residents staged a sit-in of the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Electoral Office in September 2008.

A small group, comprised of the PM's Griffith constituents, occupied the office through the morning to highlight the consequences of the Federal government signing onto the interim emission targets recommended by the Garnaut review. They have requested a meeting with the PM as members of his electorate to discuss emission reduction scenarios after the release of the Garnaut review.

The diverse group of mums, dads, grandmothers, kids and students sat in Kevin Rudd's office for three hours. There were no arrests, and the sit-in received national press coverage, highlighting the need for 2020 emission targets to stabilise dangerous climate change and to protect Australia's natural heritage assets in perpetuity.

For video footage of the event, courtesy of QUT News, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acaskRVf-Rc>.



Newcastle and Hunter residents held a peaceful occupation the Australian Labor Party Headquarters in 2007.

They carried a large piece of plywood with two small holes - for each side of a bicycle D-lock to fit through. The D-Lock fit neatly around one person's neck (pictured). This person was arrested and charged with trespass. This was one simple way to maintain their presence at the ALP Headquarters to show they were serious about moving away from dirty coal in Australia and maximise media interest and coverage of their action.



They called on the ALP to reject the new coal terminal in Newcastle port in the lead up to the NSW state election.

A lively group of parents and children visited their MP's office in Springwood, in the Blue Mountains, NSW.

The families from Blackheath travelled together on the train to their MP's office - to enter the office together, speak to the staff, & deliver a letter. They also stood outside the office, talking to shoppers, handing out leaflets about their community climate action group, taking photos and holding great banners and placards that said 'wind and solar won't harm our children' & more.

Watch an inspiring short film about their easy and effective action online at <http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=sZUWbXcsnQQ>





MEDIA AND MESSAGING

Tips for the media

When speaking to the media, it is common that you will only have 5 – 10 seconds to communicate your message – so it's important to know what you want to communicate and how you are going to say it!

Think about concise, catchy, phrases that communicate your message.

“The community expects more urgent action....”
 “The Government has failed our kids...” “We have only twelve months left to get it right”

Make sure your protest or “step-in” looks great: banners and kids and puppets are terrific images, you could also take musical instruments! Take photos that powerfully communicate the message: your child delivering a letter for Kevin Rudd, your elderly mother sitting on the floor refusing to leave until the promise is made, your team talking to passersby about the action.

Media Contacts

Email your media release to the following key mainstream outlets (this is concentrated a lot on NSW... if you need help finding media contacts in your state contact your state Greens Senator, Conservation Council or local environmentalists):

bcubby@smh.com.au, howdens@newsld.com.au, mwilkinson@smh.com.au, warrenm@theaustralian.com.au, murray@cedaily.com.au, rosslyn.beeby@canberratimes.com.au, wotherspoons@heraldsun.com.au, sophie.black@crikey.com.au, speatling@mail.fairfax.com.au, margetts.jayne@abc.net.au, radio.news@abc.net.au, newsradio@your.abc.net.au, santow.simon@abc.net.au, triplejradio@your.abc.net.au, newsroom@2gb.com, newseditor@2sm.com.au, news@nova969.com.au, newsroom@2gb.com, news@2ue.com.au, news@arn.com.au, mail@fm1032.com.au, syd.news@austereo.com.au, news.sydney@aap.com, news@seven.com.au, atnnewscos@seven.com.au, tcnewsroom@nine.com.au, news@networkten.com.au, cos@sbs.com.au, tvnews@news.abc.net.au, 7.30syd@your.abc.net.au, stateline-nsw@your.abc.net.au, sunday@nine.com.au, lateline@your.abc.net.au, producers@skynews.com.au, newsdesk@smh.com.au, dwelch@smh.com.au, editor@theaustralian.com.au, nsw@theaustralian.com.au, newsdesk@theage.com.au, sydney@afp.com, edit@nna.net.au, rob.taylor@reuters.com, wragg@rweabn.com.au, media.release@canberratimes.com.au, afrnewsdesk@afr.com.au, shdmedia@fairfax.com.au, news@dailytelegraph.com.au, news@sundaytelegraph.com.au,

Email or fax your media release to your local papers and radio stations. If you're from NSW, Rising Tide can provide you with local email, fax and phone numbers for newspapers and radio.



Once you're in and sitting down, ring the following outlets to tell them what you are doing:

- AAP (Australian Associated Press) 9322 8405 or 9322 8671
- Reuters Sydney: 9373 1500
- ABC Radio: 8333 2137
- ABC TV: 8333 4771
- Sydney Morning Herald: 9282 2018
- ABC Local Radio (find out your local number beforehand, in NSW, Rising Tide can help)
- The Australian (Sydney): 9288 1620
- The Age 03 9601 2250
- The West Australian: 08 9482 3111
- Courier Mail: 07 3666 6517
- Community Radio Stations: 2SER, 3CR
- SBS TV 9430 3715
- Commercial radio stations in your local area.

Template media release

NAME OF YOUR GROUP (if you have one)

Media Release

TODAY'S DATE

Headline: Be attention grabbing. Protest... action ... demand ... anger ...

The first line should communicate precisely what is happening and why it is worthy of news: make sure you make it sound exciting, new or different.

The next line/paragraph will fill out the details left behind: if your first line says "today 50 residents of Campbelltown are conducting a sit-in at the office of Federal member of parliament XX demand that the Federal Government step up efforts to reduce greenhouse pollution" the second line could say "The protest comes a day after the Federal Government released its policy on greenhouse pollution, which has been slammed by scientists and environmentalists as too weak and timid"

Then you can launch into quotes: Mary from Climate Action Campbelltown said, "This is an issue on which the community is not prepared to compromise Etc etc "

Carry on in this vein, communicating your message and key demands. Make sure you fit the whole thing on one page only.

Put contact details at the bottom for someone who can answer the phone and give comment on what is happening.

MEDIA RELEASE...

.... media release.... media release.... media release....

Monday 22nd September 2008
Time: 10:45 AM

Location: Kevin Rudd's office, Morningside

Rudd's constituents occupy the PM's office to save the Great Barrier Reef

Residents of the Griffith electorate today sat in Kevin Rudd's office to demand that his government's climate change policies reflect the wishes of his constituents. **The peaceful citizens refused to leave the office for over 3 hours, holding signs saying "Rudd: missing in action on climate change".**

"Our farmland, our lifestyle and our Great Barrier Reef are all threatened under the emissions reductions targets suggested to the government by economist Professor Ross Garnaut. **We are taking peaceful action to get the message though to our politicians that this isn't acceptable,**" says Brisbane resident, Bradley Smith.

"While coal and corporate lobby groups have a seat at the negotiating table with our prime minister, we, everyday citizens, are appalled that our politicians are planning to jeopardize national icons like the great barrier reef," says Kristy Walters, one of the group who refused to leave Rudd's office.

Last week Prof Ross Garnaut recommended a 5-10% greenhouse gas reduction target to the Australian government. By his own admission, these targets are based on political expedience and would be expected to lead to the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef. This scenario would also see increased droughts which would have unacceptable effects on our farmers.

"In the next 3 months the Rudd government will be deciding on our domestic climate change policy as well as our international negotiating position. **It is now or never for the citizens of Australia to tell our members of parliament that we won't stand by while our national icons are negotiated away,**" says Mr Smith.

The action marks the first day of national Climate Emergency Week. Events will be taking place across the country to highlight the need for effective action on climate change. For more Brisbane activities visit www.enoughotair.com

Media Spokesperson: Bradley Smith. Ph 04XX XXX XXX
Media Liaison: Clare Towler. Ph 04XX XXX XXX



SOME NEXT STEPS

After the Federal Government's announcement in the White Paper in December, we will have only twelve months left to turn history around. You will be stepping it up by taking part in this project, but there is lots more planned in the coming months, and more opportunities to plan together, and make our advocacy more effective.

"I believe we have reached the stage where it is time for civil disobedience to prevent the construction of new coal plants."

Al Gore

Nobel Prize Winner
September 2008

15th November: **Walk Against Warming** see www.walkagainst-warming.org for details.

22nd November: **Public vigil and protest at Eraring Power station.** For details, contact Rising Tide (risingtide@risingtide.org.au or ph 02 49261641)

December: Poznan (Poland) climate talks (UNFCCC Conference of Parties) medium term emissions reduction announcement and CPRS White Paper release – **STEP IN to your MP's office to step it up on climate change!**

February: Australia's Climate Action Summit. Come to Canberra for the biggest summit of grassroots climate activists ever held in Australia. Be part of the planning for the most important twelve months in human history. For details, contact Holly. Creenaune@foe.org.au

17th March: **People's Blockade of the World's Biggest Coal Port** (Newcastle). Join us once again as we float our way free of fossil fuels. Have a great day on the water in sunny Newcastle, and hold up coal exports at the same time!



**Camp for Climate Action Australia
Newcastle, July 2008**