

## Why the Climate Strike was necessary.

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How the disapproval of the climate strike is representative of a bigger denial of climate change.

I'm standing on the steps of Parliament House, the school students of Melbourne surrounding me, everyone chanting, "Coal, don't dig it, leave it in the ground, it's time to get with it", it's 12:30 and the sun is burning on me. We should be in school, getting an education so we can get a good job and support this country.

But our country's not supporting us.

I'm talking about the climate strike, the student led protests inspired by Swedish school student Greta Thunberg, who protested outside parliament until her country caught up on their commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement.

More than 10,000 students sacrificed their education to protest in Melbourne, myself and friends included.

But what's the point of the climate strike? Is it just an excuse to miss school? What are we actually accomplishing by just shouting "end climate change"?

## I'll tell you.

Protests show what your opinions are, therefore who you will vote for - which is the main motivator for politicians to take action - and although some of the people who attended the strike won't be voting for quite some time yet, a lot of people who protested will be voting by the time the next federal elections and state elections roll around. Politicians tend to count a protest as a few hundred votes in their direction.

Our youth voices are important - we're the group who will have to suffer through all of the mistakes past generations carelessly made. We're the next line of politicians, scientists, artists, surely we will matter when we're in charge of the country.

Scott Morrison argues that "there should be less activism in schools, and more learning in schools" - is he not aware that activism teaches us as a society what we value? Would he rather the next generation to be as numb, careless and silent as past ones? Would he rather us grow up,

get a job in corporate and vote Liberal? No wonder half the time people were chanting "no more Scomo".

To further my point, schooling won't matter when the world is ruined. Even now, half a day of school doesn't matter as much as our planet! Our world has warmed by 0.8 degrees Celsius since the industrial revolution, and although that doesn't seem like much, it only took 1-2 degrees for the Earth to drop into an ice age (earthobservory.nasa.gov). Time is running out before the world can take much more of global warming. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) warns that if we don't limit our global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030 (12 years from now) the effects of climate change will be irreversible. If we keep the global temperature at 1.5 degrees, we'll still have our reefs, we'll have lower sea levels and we'll have less of a ruined world (Watts, The Guardian). We've all seen the droughts, floods and other natural disasters that are already happening on the news. We need to take action now!

Don't worry, the world is not ending... yet. We still need to roll back carbon emissions, and quickly. We need to cut carbon emissions by 45% by 2030. It seems hard for a very corporate run, greedy, self-involved world, but we can do it. We've already made great progress in the past, we can do it again!

## Here's how:

Invest in renewable energy for houses.

29% of carbon emissions come from non-renewable energy in the United States alone. Imagine what impact fossil fuel powered electricity would have if everyone in the entire world used it. Look at it this way, coal emits between 1.4 - 2.6 pounds of CO2E/kWh\*, whether as wind energy only emits 0.02 - 0.04 pounds of CO2E/kWh, and solar power only emits 0.07 - 0.2 pounds of CO2E/kWh (ucsusa.gov).

Pollution from coal and oil powered energy is also dangerous for public health - so if you don't care about climate change, you should care about your own health - whether you die from lung cancer or not.

- Buy energy efficient light bulbs and turn off appliances at the wall.

Keeping appliances on at the wall builds up to cost you more than \$100 a year and contributes more than 1000kg of greenhouse gas emissions. Remember when you leave the house to turn off appliances at the wall, and when shopping for new ones look for the one with the highest energy efficiency rating.

 Walk or ride to work/school. If you live far away, save for a hybrid or electric car or take public transport.

We all know cars are terrible, I don't think you need to know anymore than that.

- Grow your own fruit and vegetables, and start community gardens. Even something as simple as an indoor herb garden can reduce carbon emissions.

Not only is it fun to water your plants and see them blossom into beautiful vegetables, the carbon emissions that come from transporting and growing plants on a farm. It also helps to own chickens for eggs, if you can.

- Support ethical and sustainable fashion and shop at op shops.

One new cotton t-shirt takes 2700 litres of water, and uses heaps of energy in factories. Not to mention the effect fast fashion has on the communities who make the clothes, and the coal emitted from factories and transportation of clothes has an extreme effect on the environment. (WWF)

- Educate yourself and others.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, education is our most powerful weapon. Without information, we have nothing to act on. A majority of those who aren't doing anything about climate change are just uneducated.

And lastly, advocate for climate action, like the people who attended the climate strike. It makes a difference.

<sup>\*</sup> carbon dioxide emissions per kilowatt hour.

## Bibliography

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