

Women's Climate Congress – e-update #1

20 March 2020

The short version

Working together, we started a movement. A working group has formed to continue our work. The working group has:

- landed on a name - [Women's Climate Congress](#)
- refined our [vision](#) and [purpose](#)
- agreed a preliminary approach, involving both grassroots and targeted connections
- looked at the work of similar groups
- started developing ways to communicate with you
- started connecting and sharing with others outside our group
- considered events to progress our work.

We have all responded to Earth's call, but it will not be an easy path. We invite you to offer what you can.

If you would like to know more - please read on

Working together, we started a movement

On 20 January and 11 February 2020, as bushfires ravaged our country and smoke and hail swirled around the city, 44 women gathered in Canberra, inspired by a [discussion paper by Janet Salisbury](#). We explored how women could lead a movement for united action on climate change. In those discussions we:

- shared what brings us here
- offered suggestions on how to enact a no blame culture and create the cultural change needed to allow collaboration across current divides
- considered how we can empower/inspire women to join us
- formed our initial identify and vision
- identified actions and concepts we need to take us forward
- re-affirmed the energy and creativity that can emerge when women gather to think deeply about important issues.

A working group has formed to continue our work

Since these meetings, a smaller working group has met twice - on 28 February and 11 March 2020. The working group agreed to meet fortnightly (where possible), to maintain the momentum and continue to develop the ideas proposed.

<p>We have a name</p>	<p>Having accepted that no name would perfectly suit everyone and every intention, we settled on Women's Climate Congress (WCC). Three simple words which do much to communicate what we are about.</p>
<p>We refined our vision and purpose</p>	<p>We share a vision to restore climate balance by 2030. In this future, women's leadership has helped turn the tide of political culture from polarised discord to collaboration and cooperation. Nurture of life and care for the Earth are at the centre of every government decision.</p> <p>We have developed a WCC vision, values and commitment statement.</p> <p>We have also developed a statement of who we are and our purpose. This can be circulated widely in our networks.</p>
<p>We agreed a preliminary approach</p>	<p>We will pursue this vision and purpose through two types of activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grassroots engagement - networking with a diverse cross-section of women (and later with men too) to listen, connect, inform and inspire • political engagement - targeted interaction with politicians and business leaders to do the same.
<p>We took a look at similar groups</p>	<p>Climate for change seeks to create the social climate in Australia for effective action on climate change. This group is creating awareness of climate change.</p> <p>1 Million Women is working through women to build a lifestyle revolution to fight the climate crisis. This group is looking for behaviour change.</p> <p>By comparison, WCC is looking for cultural and systems change away from the current polarised discourse that is preventing action on climate change towards collaborative processes that serve the common good and allow all parties to contribute with dignity.</p>
<p>We are developing ways to communicate with you</p>	<p>This update by email is just a start. Jenny Robinson is working on a WCC Facebook page. It will be a closed page, meaning it will not be viewable by members of the public, just by this group and those we invite to participate in our discussions and sharing.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Janet and Di Martin are working on a simple website to allow people to join this email list for ongoing information about events and actions.</p>
<p>We are connecting and sharing</p>	<p>We aim to reach out to other women's organisations and we are lucky that we already have in our working group, Barbara O'Dwyer (immediate past president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) and Barbara Baikie (immediate past president of the National Council of Women Australia). On</p>

	<p>5 March, Janet gave a talk about our work on an international webinar of WILPF and has also had discussions with the current national president and local branch.</p> <p>Barbara Baikie has also shared our work with the national board of NCWA and we were hoping to speak at the national conference in Adelaide in May (although coronavirus will probably now prevent this conference going ahead).</p> <p>Janet attended the National Climate Emergency Summit in Melbourne on 14-15 March and made several interesting connections there. See Safe Climate Declaration.</p> <p>International Women’s Day gave an opportunity for an impromptu brunch at Janet’s place. About 20 women from diverse parts of the Canberra community enjoyed a relaxing morning and shared their passion for cultural change to allow transition to a sustainable future - and women’s role in that. It was great to welcome Margaret Blakers (founder of Women’s Environmental Leadership Australia) to this event and share her wisdom.</p> <p>Many of us have written to our local MPs and signed the petition to support of Zali Steggall’s Climate Change Bill. Keep talking to friends and encouraging them to support this Bil. It was due to be introduced into Parliament on 23 March but this has now been delayed due to COVID19. We need to urge MPs (especially government MPs) to support a conscience vote. Janet has written to Zali to request a meeting.</p>
<p>We will give more thought to events</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The next open WCC meeting. Ideally this would occur by end April, however, current circumstances suggest an in-person gathering might be unwise, so we will consider other ways of ‘spacious connection’ We were hoping to invite a guest speaker, possibly Nicole Isaacs from 1 Million Women. 2. A half day WCC workshop to allow some focused time to refine our approach and agree actions. 3. A WCC national conference to bring together work and ideas from around the country to develop principles for transition to a sustainable future. <p>Covid-19 will undoubtedly impact planning for, and conduct of traditional (in person) meetings and a conference. So perhaps we need to think outside the square for other ways of convening discussions amongst women. We are good at finding ways to make things work under many forms of adversity.</p>
<p>Offer what you can</p>	<p>One of our greatest strengths - we are a network of women from all walks. Individually we have much to offer, in many different ways. If any of the information above helps you see how you can contribute, please email wcc-workinggroup@googlegroups.com</p>

We have responded to Earth's call, but it will not be an easy path

Climate scientists have warned we have only one more decade to get our house in order or suffer the full consequences of Earth's fury. There is no easy language or precedent for what we are trying to do. We will face challenges along the way. We will need to adapt and evolve as we progress.

But first, we need to make a start. We have done that. Thank you all for your contributions so far.

Contact: janet.salisbury@iinet.net.au