

Thursday 5 September 2024

Charities lead the way on climate action as 80 per cent of global citizens call on governments to do more

Today, on UN International Day of Charity, Better Futures Australia celebrates the tireless work of charities and not-for-profits in catalysing climate action.

More and more Aussies are giving to trusted charities in the climate space, while others are rolling up their sleeves and starting their own not-for-profits.

They include AFL players kicking eco-goals with Footy for Climate, GPs driving Doctors for the Environment Australia, and First Nations renewable energy champions behind Original Power, building Australia's first Indigenous-owned, grid-connected solar farm in the Northern Territory.

Meet them *and many more* at Australia's largest multi-sectoral gathering on climate, the [Better Futures Forum](#) (10-11 September) at Canberra's National Film and Sound Archive. The third forum (since 2021) brings together 200+ public and private sector leaders to showcase significant strides in community-based climate solutions, and scale Australia's readiness for an ambitious national response to climate change.

Notably, at a time when a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report indicates an overwhelming 80 per cent of people worldwide want governments to do more on climate change. This global sentiment mirrors the urgency and commitment seen within Australian charities and their community and non-government engagements.

"As an alliance of climate champions, the strength of the Better Futures Forum lies in our diversity and ability to share real-world examples of climate action – *and solutions* – across all corners of society and the economy," says Lisa Cliff, Director of the Better Futures Australia program (supported by registered charity, Climate Action Network Australia). She adds that about half the forum's participants are from charities.

"The Forum showcases how charities are pivotal in shaping Australia's climate policy and strategies. Every day, they show up focused on driving a just transition to climate safe-and-ready communities, while also tackling disproportionate climate impacts on disadvantaged people and our natural world."

On International Day of Charity (5 September), Lisa says it's encouraging an increasing number of Australians back the efforts of charities working in the climate space, recognising the urgency to build the industries, livelihoods and communities of the clean energy economy. Latest [data](#) shows Australian donations and bequests to charities working on climate and environment programs rose 82 per cent, from \$148 million in 2018 to \$270 million in 2021.

"What's even more encouraging – and something the Australian government can't ignore – is the fact that 80 per cent, or four out of five people globally, want their governments to take stronger climate actions," Lisa says, citing the biggest ever standalone public opinion survey on climate change, the [People's Climate Vote 2024](#), announced in June and conducted by the UNDP and the

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University of Oxford. The UNDP is the lead organisation in the fight to end injustice of poverty, inequality and climate change.

The survey also reveals women from the world's five big emitters, including Australia, are 'more in favour of strengthening their country's commitments by 10 to 17 percentage points'; and 72 per cent of people globally 'want their country to move away from fossil fuels to clean energy quickly'.

The *People's Climate Vote 2024* put 15 questions to more than 73,000 people across 77 countries (87% of the global population) to better understand how people are experiencing the impacts of climate change and how they want world leaders to respond.

Commenting on the findings, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner says: "The survey results – unprecedented in their coverage – reveal a level of consensus that is truly astonishing. We urge leaders and policymakers to take note, especially as countries develop their next round of climate action pledges – or 'nationally determined contributions' (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement."

Denise Cauchi pivoted from a 20-year career in human rights and international development after realising "climate change is the most urgent challenge of our time".

Today, the Maltese migrant to Australia, awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her contribution to human rights and multicultural communities, leads the work of Climate Outreach in Australia. A global charity, founded in the UK in 2004, Climate Outreach is recognised as the first to focus exclusively on public engagement with climate change.

On 11 September at Better Futures Forum, she will moderate a panel exploring opportunities to unlock public engagement aligned to Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), adopted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to denote work under Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement.

"Climate change affects us all, and every Australian needs access to accurate information and education, together with the inalienable right to voice opinions on policies that impact their future," says Denise.

"Public engagement on climate must prioritise the groups who are most impacted, including First Nations peoples, low-income communities, and fossil fuel industry workers. And it must also reach the multicultural population, representing one in three Australians. Participation of all these groups in decision-making is crucial for a fair and inclusive climate response."

Also on the speakers' line-up, Kellie Caught, Climate and Energy Program Director with the Australian Council of Social Services, says: "It's unacceptable that 3.3 million people in Australia (1.9 million households) currently live below the poverty line, with many trapped in inefficient housing that's far too expensive to cool, and forced to choose between putting food on the table, affording medicine or paying an energy bill.

"Energy poverty is a policy choice. The government could reduce growing energy inequality, permanently slash energy bills and cut emissions by accelerating investment in energy efficiency and electrification upgrades for low-income housing.

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On 10 September, Kellie joins Better Futures Forum's plenary panel, *Our Opportunity to Repower Households and Communities*, which will outline a call for an historic national package to cut power bills *now* and invest in an efficient, all-electric future.

Other climate leaders representing respected charities and nonprofits at the Better Futures Forum include:

Energy Consumers Australia CEO, Brendan French; **Rewiring Australia** Managing Director, Kate Minter; **The Next Economy** CEO, Amanda Cahill; **Beyond Zero Emissions** CEO, Heidi Lee; **RE-Alliance** National Director, Andrew Bray; **Original Power** Community Leader, Chantell Johns; **Footy for Climate** co-founder and AFL player (St Kilda ruckman) Tom Campbell; **Asian Australians for Climate Solutions** Chair, Dr Kim Loo, a GP and past Chair of NSW Branch Council of Australian Medical Association; **Doctors for the Environment Australia** CEO and GP Dr Kate Wylie; **Green Building Council of Australia** Chief Impact Officer, Jorge Chapa; **World Wildlife Fund Australia** Senior Manager Low Carbon Futures, Monica Richter; **Climate and Health Alliance** CEO, Michelle Isles; **Gudanji For Country** Director, Rikki Dank; **Multicultural Leadership Initiative** Managing Director, Wesa Chau; **Brazil's Talanoa Institute** President, Natalie Unterstell; **Indigenous Peoples' Organisation Australia** Co-Chair, Aboriginal Pastor Uncle Ray Minniecon; **Smart Energy Council International Director**, Richie Merzian; **SEED Mob** Impact Lead, Georgia Griffiths; **Sydney Community Forum** Executive Officer, Asha Ramzan; **Climate Council of Australia**, Prof Tim Flannery; **Climateworks Centre** System Lead (Sustainable Economies) Kylie Turner and Senior Project Manager (Engagement) Tracie Armstrong; **Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education** Director 'Alopi Latukefu; **Energy Efficiency Council** CEO, Luke Menzel, and President, Merrily Hunter; **Gulf Savannah NRM** Sustainable Land Management Team Leader, Sarah Stevens; **Healthy Land and Water** Assistant Team Lead, Diana Partridge; **Local Conference of Youth Australia** Organising Team member, Amelia Turk; **NRM Regions Australia** CEO, Kate Andrews; **Super Power Institute** CEO Baethan Mullen; **The Climate Reality Project Australia** Blue Pacific Research & Engagement Lead, Thelma Raman; **UN Global Compact Network Australia** Chair, Fiona Reynolds; and **Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists** Acting Director Debbie Medaris.

Better Futures Forum gathers hundreds of leaders from every sector – including First Nations-led organisations, finance and faith communities, cities and states, businesses large and small, agriculture, resources and energy sectors, health and social services, unions, think tanks, charities, and higher education. The forum will share insights on local and scalable solutions, and deliver new reports on community energy, export energy, local government and more.

Full list of speakers at https://www.betterfutures.org.au/full_lineup_2024, and program at https://www.betterfutures.org.au/full_program_2024

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