

# The Women's Climate Congress Charter for Change 2022

DRAFT for comment

July 2022



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## About this draft

This draft is released for comment prior to the National Congress of Women to be held in Canberra on 11–12 September.

This draft includes opening statements to set the charter in context. These are followed by a series of actions that form the heart of the charter and set out the immediate and longer-term changes that our members and other women are calling for to stabilize the climate and ensure human and planetary wellbeing. Each of these actions start with a statement of our commitment (italic text, eg '*We recognise ...' We claim...*'), followed by some draft actions (bullet points) that we offer as preliminary ideas for your further comment and development.

All comments will be noted and a new draft will inform part of the considerations undertaken at the Congress. Following that, the Women's Climate Congress will finalise the draft and launch the Charter as a public document.

When finalised, the calls to action in the Charter will form the basis of the ongoing advocacy work of the WCC.

Please send your comments, ideas and suggestions in one of these formats:

- [preferred] Fill in the feedback form here: <https://forms.gle/T6uhzJDmBru8p7J26>
- Send your comments in an email to [womensclimatecongress@gmail.com](mailto:womensclimatecongress@gmail.com)
- If you have the software to do so, annotate this PDF file

## **Why do we need a Charter?**

We women of the Women's Climate Congress and others despair that Earth is hurtling towards catastrophic climate change that humanity is failing to mitigate and repair.

We grieve the inevitable catastrophic impacts on all current and future life unless immediate, united and effective action is taken.

We recognise that the climate crisis affects every aspect of life. To find the way forward, we need to engage minds and hearts across disciplines and different ways of knowing.

We know that we need to take action urgently and we need to take it together. Set in the framework of the Women's Climate Congress vision and values, this charter aims to provide a framework that reflects the aspirations of women for that action.

## **The Charter as a call to action**

This Charter is a call to action from the hearts of women to move forward from the historically adversarial grip on governance structures and policy agendas, and to enter an era of collaborative governance to urgently stabilise the climate, and to build ongoing human and planetary wellbeing.

The demands/claims in this Charter are aimed at government, business and the community. It is only by working together across diverse interests that we can have hope of surviving the challenges we face.

Many of the ideas here are expressed in international frameworks such as the Earth Charter, UN Sustainable Development Goals and UN Commission on the Status of Women, as well as the national vision for Australia developed by Australia Remade.<sup>1</sup>

They are also drawn from many conversations hosted by the WCC on these issues with women from all over Australia. The ideas in this draft charter are presented here not as an endpoint but as the starting point for a wave of action that can be supported by women everywhere.

The action we seek relates to the immediate and urgent actions to stabilise the climate, and broader societal actions to ensure lasting human and planetary wellbeing.

### **Actions to stabilise the climate**

- Take responsibility
- Create a unified national plan
- Embrace gender-balanced governance

### **Actions for human and planetary wellbeing**

- Commit to intergenerational equity and rights of all Earth life
- Listen to and learn from First Nations knowledge
- Adopt new economic paradigms
- Encourage representation in governance
- Elevate compassion and kindness in government
- Support imagination and creative thinking at the centre
- Design education fit for purpose into the future

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<sup>1</sup> See further details of these initiatives in the Resources section

## Who we are — the WCC vision and values

### *Our vision...*

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.<sup>2</sup>

### *Our values and commitment*

We, a web of women, seek and support wisdom for the common good.

We acknowledge the ancestral wisdom of First Peoples and accept our responsibility as custodians of a precious world that must be nurtured as it nurtures us.

Sharing a great desire to look after the young, we raise our voices, confident in the potential of women to help positive change for all future life.

As beneficiaries of the industrial age, we acknowledge our responsibility for the present situation with grateful hearts and with lament.

Weary of conflict and polarisation, we resist judgment and blame, embrace uncertainty and encourage mediation and collaboration for a safe passage from climate chaos to climate survival or balance?

Listening deeply to the science, we recognise the interconnections of Earth systems and human influences within those systems. With this in mind, we bring our collective imagination to uncover innovative, equitable and sustainable ways forward. Artistic vision and creativity are at the heart of imagining the necessary transformations.

Connecting head, heart and hands, we will collaborate across all genders to restore nurture of life and care for the Earth to the centre of every decision made at every level, local to national and international.

We assert that qualities of the heart (such as compassion, love, empathy, forgiveness) are the basis for true strength. These human laws must be reactivated for us to survive.

Following the footsteps of our foremothers we seize this moment, charged with a realisation of our responsibility to respond to Earth's call and our shared aspirations.

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<sup>2</sup> We define 'climate balance' in our [WCC position paper #1 'What do we mean by 'climate balance'?](#) (published 25 May 2021)

## Actions to stabilise the climate

[These are core areas for the WCC relating to our vision for urgent nonpartisan collaboration and women's leadership to achieve climate balance by 2030]

### *Take responsibility*

*We recognise our joint human responsibility, as citizens of the developed world, for the current climate emergency, through population expansion, land-use, and lifestyle demands for fossil fuels, transport, excessive consumerism and other privileges.*

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Australian governments to lead international efforts to stabilise the climate, in line with scientific findings, analysis and advice.
- Government, climate agencies, and industries (agriculture, mining, energy production, manufacturing etc) to cooperate in the higher interests of young people, future generations and survival of life on Earth.
- Serious and respectful consultation with First Peoples about land and water understanding and management.
- Other?

### *Create a unified national plan*

*We call on political parties and community leaders to work together to comply with scientific advice to stabilise the climate and transition our economy and lifestyles to a sustainable and just future for all.*

To reach a scientifically informed consensus, a process is needed to enable diverse stakeholders to consider the issues together respectfully. This would offer an opportunity for diverse interests to collaborate in finding just and sustainable ways to stabilise the climate and secure a safe future for all.

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Multiparty commitment to develop a National Plan for action to address climate risks with:
  - an independent process for mediation of stakeholder issues (agriculture, mining, energy, manufacturing, First Peoples, community, government etc)
  - protocols to avoid conflicts of interest.
- The National Plan to include actions to:
  - phase out fossil fuels in line with IPCC recommendations and international commitments
  - provide a clear transition pathway for affected communities
  - address risks from extreme weather and climate impacts already under way
  - a fully resourced civilian capacity to respond to the scale of emergency likely in coming years.
- Other?

## ***Embrace gender-balanced governance***

*We claim full, equal and meaningful participation in decision-making and action towards a climate-secure, peaceful and compassionate future – a future where all lives are valued. where diversity of life experience (such as age, culture, sexuality, ability) is seen as vital for good decision making, and Earth’s sustaining patterns and systems are protected.*

Current governance systems, based on a colonial and patriarchal past, reflect a predominantly male worldview and attitude to wellbeing. Women’s independent voice and agency are crucial to create balance in evaluations and priorities, and thereby planning for new governance structures and future sustenance of life.

### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Quotas and other structural processes to allow women of diverse backgrounds to have equal access to and full participation in policy development and decision making.
- Women to have shared and equal counsel in all national and international forum for developing action on climate change and to create lasting planetary wellbeing.
- A multiparty women’s group (‘Women’s Caucus’) in all federal state and territory parliaments to allow women to work together on issues of common concern.
- Other?

## Actions for human and planetary wellbeing

[These are themes that have emerged in our community conversations, monthly online events and other forums as central to achieving lasting change.]

### ***Commit to intergenerational equity and respecting rights of all Earth life***

*We commit to the wellbeing of future human generations and call for all life on Earth to be considered in the development and implementation of all policies.*

In 2016, Wales was the first international jurisdiction to appoint Future Generations Commissioner. The UN has called on other countries to follow suit and establish governance mechanisms that place future generations at the centre of decisions and ensure that they have a voice at the policy level.<sup>3</sup>

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Introduce Protection of Future Generations Legislation similar to the Welsh model.
- Establish a Commission for the Future within the Australian Government to provide planning and review of all policies impacting, or potentially impacting future generations.
- Other?

### ***Listen to and learn from First Nations knowledge***

*We affirm that First Nations peoples hold a deep connection to the Earth. Their First Law describes our reciprocal human love and duty of care to the Earth, which gives life, love and provision to us all, and to all planetary life.*

This deep connection to Earth underpins First Nations land management practices and governance structures, including the autonomous and complementary roles of women and men in decision making.

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Provide opportunities with First Nations peoples to formally acknowledge the damage and disruptions of new settlement upon the traditionally managed Australian landscape.
- Seek opportunities with First Nations peoples to learn from their historic knowledge and practices in land and water management, in forest thinning and purposeful mitigation of wild-fire risk
- In seeking more collaborative and gender-balanced governance (see above), actively learn from and integrate First Nations approaches.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/news/wales-leading-the-way-with-future-generations-legislation-un-plans-to-adopt-welsh-approach/>

- Other?

### ***Adopt new economic paradigms***

*We value the life-enhancing gifts of nature, and the gifts of homemaking, caring and nurture of life, as having complementary economic value with industrial and commercial services.*

New economic models are emerging that are designed to create an ecologically healthy, inclusive, socially just and gender-balanced society.<sup>4</sup>

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Adopt a broader Wellbeing Index in addition to/ instead of GDP measurement which includes environmental measures of health.
- Ensure climate risk is incorporated into corporate law to reflect all relevant duties of care.
- Include measurement of the costs of not taking action on climate risk as well the costs of mitigation or remediation in budget policy.
- Provide policy frameworks and promote business opportunities which support a circular economy.
- Other? [noting that focus here is on climate change]

### ***Encourage citizen representation and participation in governance***

*We recognise that at the heart of democracy citizens' concerns are the basis for change. Participatory processes allow citizens to take part in decision-making and give impulse for change.*

#### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Establish a 'Participatory Democracy Authority' to support public authorities and civil society stakeholders to establish mechanisms for citizen participation.<sup>5</sup>
- Governments to support participatory projects such as the citizens' forum being trialed in the ACT.
- Other?

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<sup>4</sup> See for example 'Doughnut economics' by Kate Raworth: <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>

<sup>5</sup> See for example, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/339306da-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/339306da-en> .

## ***Elevate compassion and kindness in government***

*We assert that qualities of the heart (such as compassion, love, empathy, forgiveness) are the basis for true strength. These qualities, have not always been respected, elevated and applied in governments.*

### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Adopt the Charter for Compassion Australia across all government business.<sup>6</sup>
- Consider adopting a 'compassion threshold' in policy similar to that being developed in the UK.<sup>7</sup>
- Other?

## ***Support imagination and creative thinking at the centre***

*We long for the transmission of knowledge and law about ways to live in harmony with Earth to be recognised as a role of artists and storytellers. In many indigenous cultures this remains central.*

The unfolding climate change issue has made it abundantly clear that hard facts alone do not capture people's feelings and hearts, or inspire unified action. The arts have the ability to move people to new understanding and action and to provide comfort and inspiration in times of challenge.

### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- Provide policy frameworks that support integration of the arts into public discourse, and in recognition of their key role in community wellbeing.
- Include funding for artistic contributions in climate education, and community rehabilitation activities after climate related disasters.
- Other?

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.charterforcompassion.com.au/>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.compassioninpolitics.com/>

## ***Design education fit for purpose into the future***

*We call for children and citizens in Australia to be educated in the true story, sufferings, and responsibilities of colonial settlement, subsequent environmental degradations, our proper and modest human place within the natural world, and our responsibilities to future generations and life on Earth.*

### **We call for:**

[DRAFT ideas for comment, consideration, expansion]

- A commitment to honesty in communicating historic, social and environmental truths and their implications.
- Review the curriculum to give equal importance to the history and creative output of women, of the First Peoples of Australia, and of the many settler peoples' multicultural contributions.
- Teaching of scientific and economic principles and methods of analysis as a foundation for citizen engagement with actions to minimise and ameliorate the effects of climate change, and create long-term human and planetary wellbeing.
- Other?

## Resources

**Note** (for info – not intended to necessarily be part of the charter)

**Women’s Climate Congress** *Vision, values and commitment statement* gives further detail of the WCC vision and core principles. <sup>1</sup>

**The Earth Charter** provides a visionary ethical foundation for national and international governance.<sup>2</sup>

**The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** develops global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. In particular, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction are the subject of CSW66 Agreed Conclusions (March 2022).<sup>3</sup>

**The UN Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>4</sup> are a framework for actions to realise this vision. The issues described in this charter are reflected in the following goals:

- **SDGs 1 & 2:** Refuse to allow any child in Australia to live in poverty, or any family to face food insecurity.
- **SDG 3:** Invest in good health as well-being so that our health system can survive the stresses that will come with climate disasters.
- **SDG 4:** Every child needs inclusive and equitable access to quality education to prepare for the uncertain future of work. Lifelong learning must be available to all.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5&10:** Achieve equality, including gender equality and empower women and girls
- **SDGs 11,12,14,15:** Strive for sustainability in every aspect of our personal lives, our lives as citizens and our lives as fellows with other-than-human beings on the planet.
- **SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, where everyone has access to justice.

**Australia Remade** is a collectively imagined vision of a near future for Australia based on listening to hundreds of people from many walks of life. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.womensclimatecongress.com/uploads/3/0/2/0/30206683/wcc-vision-final\\_19sept20\\_.pdf](https://www.womensclimatecongress.com/uploads/3/0/2/0/30206683/wcc-vision-final_19sept20_.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://earthcharter.org/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw66-2022>

<sup>4</sup><https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.australiaremade.org/>