



## Women's Climate Congress e-Update #8

March 2021

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### FROM JANET SALISBURY

So much has happened this month. We launched our 2021 series of Women's Climate Conversations online, we held two online Members' Circles and we co-hosted a networking breakfast on 'Women in Climate and Health' in the Senate Rose Gardens at Old Parliament House. We will tell you more about these events and other activities in this issue – including an update on our National Congress in November, which I am particularly excited about. However, the most powerfully moving event in the past month was the Women's March4Justice on 15 March.

Several members of the Congress attended in Canberra and we know that many of you attended in your localities. These marches tapped into the raw emotion of the thousands of women who attended all over Australia, and of many others who were unable to attend for various reasons. In this context I want to acknowledge that for many survivors this event may have triggered pain and distress that they did not feel comfortable to share in public and I hope that all women have access to the support they need at times like this.



The march was also an opportunity to express the frustration and rage from decades of violence against women. Despite this, speaker after speaker found time to mention compassion, hope, love, listening, respect and other qualities that can heal and bring us together for a safe future. And the patriarchal systems alive in our political, legal and other institutions came in for a hammering, the like of which I have not heard in a very long time. But at the end Janine Hendry – the woman who whistled the whole event into existence – spoke of her 16-year-old son and the sort of gender equality she wanted to see for him in his adult life saying it does not take one group to give up their equality for another to have it. Bring on the brave new world heralded by this 'great uprising'!

This has all given us pause for thought about how and when mass movements occur in response to grief and deep frustration and how this also applies to our unmet concerns for the climate safety of younger and future generations and all life on Earth. As our sign at the march said, we hope that the March4Justice is just the beginning in terms of women's voices rising to bring justice for all and to rebalance the currently stuck political systems before it is too late.

## UPCOMING DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

(Please note all times in this newsletter are in Australian Eastern Standard Time)

### **Tuesday 13 April, 5.30-6.30pm AEST Women's Climate Conversation online: *Building a unified national agreement for Australia's climate response.***

Join us online to explore how the Women's Climate Congress can promote nonpartisan collaboration to develop a national plan for climate action. In this event, [Dr Janet Salisbury](#) will be in conversation with [Rhiân Williams](#), a highly experienced dispute systems design practitioner with over 30 years' experience in large scale public policy dispute resolution processes, and [Val Lang AM](#), who has contributed significantly to the Rural Women's Movement over many years particularly through the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women. Rhiân and Val have worked together in the past to bring rural women from across the sector together for united action.

**Rhiân Williams** is a dispute systems design practitioner whose work focuses on supporting governments and others to transition from adversarial to collaborative dispute resolution mechanisms. Her work centres on projects that extend the capacity of individuals and communities in creating partnerships to support dialogue and mutual problem solving. She is particularly skilled in working in highly diverse contexts ranging from remote Indigenous communities through to senior executives in the Australian Public service and business and in developing programs that support those engaged in complex, challenging and changing environments.



**Val Lang AM** is a life member of Australian Women in Agriculture. Val lives in rural Victoria and continues to be active in agriculture, environment and community engagement. Val has formal training in agriculture, education and leadership and director experience in health, philanthropy and catchment management. She has a special interest in how contentious issues can be discussed in a community while the community can still stay together.

[Register for this event](#) via this link and please share this invitation widely with friends and colleagues. All are welcome.

### **NEW! 26 April, 5.30-7.00pm, Women's Climate Congress Book Club**

(5.30pm for informal chat, commencing at 5.45pm for 1 hour with the option to extend 7pm)

This is an invitation from inaugural Congress member [Dr Jenny Robinson](#) to all Congress members anywhere in the world to join a three-month trial of a monthly online book club discussion.



#### **The purpose is to:**

- share reactions to contemporary books related to the Congress's core values and actions
- provide opportunities for members to build relationships with likeminded people and learn together
- build capacity for and encourage [distributive leadership](#) in line with Congress principles for those members who elect to take on responsibilities (such as convening this book club over the longer term).

#### **Initial program:**

- **Monday April 26**, *Beyond Climate Grief A journey of love, snow, fire and an enchanted beer can*, by Jonica Newby (See our report on this book launch later in this update.)
- **Monday May 24**, *Women and Leadership: Real Lives, Real Lessons*, by Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Julia Gillard
- **Monday June 28**, recommendations from members and straw poll.

**How to join:** Contact Jenny Robinson at [drjennyrobinson@gmail.com](mailto:drjennyrobinson@gmail.com)

## PLANNING FOR THE FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS OF WOMEN

**Wed 29 November – Friday 1 December 2021**

**Albert Hall, Canberra and online**

We have started planning for the National Congress and here is an update on our early thinking. Your feedback and your ideas are welcome!

The aim of the National Congress is to turn the tide away from the current adversarial approach to action on climate change and to weave a new story for our collective future. By 2030 we want the scientists to be able to reassure us we are on course to maintain a safe climate.

We will invite women and gender diverse people from across Australia, from all political affiliations, cultural and social backgrounds and from diverse knowledge systems, disciplines and practices.

We will also encourage politicians to visit the congress and engage with participants, and we hope there will be opportunities for meetings/activities at Parliament House during the 3 days.

We will build on the work we have already done, as well as ongoing action on climate change nationally and internationally. The congress is deliberately planned to take place after the Glasgow COP meeting to tap into international wisdom and policies coming from that gathering.

We know from recent events how powerful women's voices can be when we work together. One outcome of the November congress will be a 'statement from women' on how Australia can move towards a safe climate future.

### How you can be involved

In the lead up to the National Congress we will provide opportunities for members and others to have input to the development of the congress program and the drafting of the statement so even if you can't attend in person or online, you can be part of the 'rising tide'. More details in our next issue.

### HIGHLIGHTS SINCE OUR LAST UPDATE

#### 25 February – [A First Meeting with a First Woman](#)

One of the working circles of the Congress was set up to encourage 'Respectful learning and sharing relationships with Indigenous Women' and we are deeply aware that reaching out must be done in respect and friendship.

Congress member Honey Nelson is a settler woman who has developed friendships with Indigenous people over many years, and on 25 February she introduced Congress members Kirsten Anker and Janet Salisbury to Ms. Diyan Coe, Wiradjuri woman and resident caretaker of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra (pictured). Honey's longer story about this meeting, written in compliance with Dyan, is available via the link above. Here is an excerpt and introduction:



'This first meeting was more a teaching than a conversation. We learned something about the First Peoples' ancestral way of *societal and spiritual balance*: in the equal significance of women and men, of their shared and also their separate practical and sacred responsibilities, the deep and necessary differences in their tasks and the ways they think.

We talked about a lot of things: including the unhealed cruelties not only upon indigenous peoples and country, but also upon the early convicts. I have concentrated on her picture of men and women, that we have similarities but necessary differences. In my early conversations with Dee on Women's business, this fact of our special identity is central. I think we can open an opportunity to talk more about women's deep realms of understanding and responsibility.

My piece is longish, but I felt the messages of balance, equity, responsibility, good law, respect for all Life, are worth spelling out.'

## 2 March – Launch of our 2021 series of Women’s Climate Conversations online

To celebrate International Women’s Day we launched our online conversations series for 2021 on 2 March by considering *How can women’s leadership inspire collaborative national action on climate change?* Our conversationalists were [Cristina Talacko](#) Chairperson of Coalition for Conservation and [Dr Kim Loo](#), a GP, Co-chair of the NSW branch of Doctors for the Environment Australia and member of the Citizens Climate Lobby Australia, hosted by Dr Janet Salisbury. [You can watch a recording of this event here.](#)

## 16 March – *Women in Climate and Health* – Networking Breakfast

The Women’s Climate Congress hosted this event in collaboration with the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and Environment, Dr Sophie Lewis, and Dr Arnagretta Hunter of the ANU Medical School and ANU Climate Institute. We were joined for a lovely outdoor breakfast in the Senate Rose Gardens at Old Parliament House by approximately 100 women including elected representatives – Alicia Payne (ALP) Member for Canberra, Julie Owens (ALP), Member for Parramatta, Senator Janet Rice from Victoria (Australian Greens) and Canberra MLAs – Elizabeth Lee (leader of the Liberal Party in the ACT), Marisa Paterson (ALP) and Emma Davidson (ACT Greens).

[Dhani Gilbert](#) (former Young ACT Citizen of the Year, Wiradjuri woman and environmental science student) spoke without notes and enlivened us with her aspiration to build the connections between ancient Indigenous knowledge and western science to deal with the climate challenges ahead.

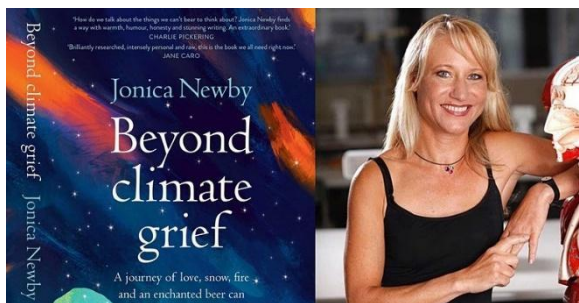
[Felicity McCallum](#) (an Awabakal woman from the Hunter Valley and Reconciliation Scholar at Charles Sturt University) spoke movingly on climate change and the bushfires through a lens of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships and talked about how to reach out to those with whom we disagree with humour and tenderness. Here’s a link to [Felicity’s presentation.](#)

[Dr Liz Hanna](#) (Honorary Senior Fellow, Fenner School of Environment & Society, and Climate Change Institute; Chair, Environmental Health Working Group, World Federation of Public Health Associations) brought some of us to tears reminding us of the terrible bushfires of 2020 and their ongoing impact. Here’s a link to [Liz’s presentation.](#)



From top left clockwise: Dr Sophie Lewis, Dr Liz Hanna, Dr Janet Salisbury, participants enjoy breakfast, Felicity McCallum, Dhani Gilbert

## 17 March – Launch of *Beyond Climate Grief* by Jonica Newby at ANU, Canberra



We have been delighted to welcome many new members to the Congress in the past month, and we are especially pleased that well-known science reporter and presenter of the ABC science show *Catalyst*, Jonica Newby, has joined us.

Jonica's latest book on climate grief has just been published and several of us attended her book launch in Canberra. In *Beyond Climate Grief* Jonica responds to the challenge facing so many of us. How do we find courage when climate change overwhelms us? Based on her research into the impact of global warming on places she loves, this is also a personal story, often funny (eg the story of the enchanted beer can) and deeply moving.

*Beyond Climate Grief* provides a recipe for building the emotional sustenance needed to live the best lives we can in face of the uncertainties ahead. See online for upcoming launch events in other places.

This book will be the topic of the Women's Climate Congress Book Club on 26 April (see above) so come along and share your response to this very original take on living with climate change.

### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

As we release this update our membership numbers have risen to over 200 and our Facebook following has reached 660. The more members we have the greater our potential influence. Please keep encouraging your friends, colleagues and relatives to join via the Join us form on our [website homepage](#).

### Feedback from our first Members' Circles of 2021 held on 23 February

We held two sessions and were pleased to welcome a friendly mix of new and more established members. Thank you to those who provided feedback. Here's a summary:

- 'The energy of the circle was so supportive, nurturing and welcoming ...' 'I really like your non-judgemental, inclusive approach and think it is a great model to gently invite participation from all sectors and increase awareness with a wider group of women being involved and feeling a sense of ownership ...' 'I liked having the choice between a mid-day and early evening time slot.'
- Some suggestions were about content. Our online Women's Climate Conversations series in coming months will cover some of this, noting that the Congress advocates for an inclusive nonpartisan approach to developing a climate response, rather than for particular technical solutions – and that there are many other organisations with the expertise to cover climate solutions.
- Some requested more introductions and time to talk together in small groups, as well as in the larger forum, so we will trial extending the time to 1 hour 15 mins to allow for this.
- Clearer exposition of Congress purpose and success measures was recommended; we have noted this and will give it more emphasis.

Thanks again for these comments. Our next Members' Circles in May will aim to reflect our response.

### An invitation to share a response to 'what inspires you?'

At our Membership and Capacity Circle earlier this month, new member, Saba Baig, suggested that these updates should include some inspiring quotes or inspiring stories to keep us all going.

So we thought we would invite you to share what inspires you. This could be a story, a person, a picture, a poem, a video, a podcast or a song. We all need encouragement and inspiration at some point in our lives. If you would like to share your inspiration piece with other Congress members in an upcoming issue please send it to [womensclimatecongress@gmail.com](mailto:womensclimatecongress@gmail.com)

## BUILDING NEW CONNECTIONS

### *The Congress is now a partner with the Australian Compassion Council*



The Australian Compassion Council is part of a global Charter for Compassion movement comprising a growing number of members, partners, and compassionate communities working toward the vision of a compassionate global community.

The Congress has been invited to join the Environment Sector of the Charter for Compassion because our vision for climate balance encompasses a compassionate and caring approach to each other and to the earth. We agree that compassion can be transformative by motivating individuals and communities to care for each other, to relieve suffering wherever it is found, and to connect to other communities across the globe to ensure well-being for all beings on the planet.

The vision of the environmental sector of the Charter speaks to the responsibility of all humans to be stewards of our planet and to seek justice for all living things. Its mission is to galvanize and support compassionate actions that honour and sustain the web of life - all of which fit well with the vision and values of the Congress. We look forward to strengthening this partnership.

More information is available in the links below for the Australian branch of the organisation: [www.charterforcompassion.com.au](http://www.charterforcompassion.com.au) and for the global movement: <https://charterforcompassion.org/charter/affirm> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/CharterforCompassion>.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE CONGRESS

- Encourage your friends, relatives and colleagues to join us via our [website](#)
- Start conversations and activities in your area. See our [Get involved page](#) for links to our information kit, flyer and templates to guide you – and we are happy to help.
- Join us on social media and invite your friends to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)
- [Contact us](#) to discuss how you might like to be involved and/or to share your ideas for collaborative action on climate change.
- Introduce us to women's groups or other relevant organisations.
- [Make a financial contribution](#) if you are able to or help us raise funds.

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