



**To: Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications**

**Submission to the Inquiry into the Grid Reliability Fund Bill 2020
From: Women's Climate Congress — a women's initiative for united action on climate change
Submitted: 23 September 2020**

About the Women's Climate Congress

The Women's Climate Congress was founded in January 2020 in response to 'Black Summer' 2019-20 bushfires and escalating climate change. We resolved to develop a national network of women from all political perspectives to promote the urgent need for nonpartisan collaboration to stabilise the climate and to promote lasting cultural change in our public discourse towards compassion, nurture of life and custodianship of the planet.

In the short time since January we have built a diverse network of women in electorates across the country, presented our ideas to decision makers, including the National Covid Coordination Advisory Board, established alliances with other women's organisations as well as other organisations engaged in climate change issues, contacted all federal MPs and have either met or are meeting with a growing number of them.

Our key principles are:

ACCEPTANCE

We accept the scientific consensus expressed in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and call for effective action to decarbonise our economy to safeguard the future of our children and grandchildren.

We accept that radical transformation can cause economic harm, and acknowledge that the burden of change should not fall only on groups immediately affected but should be shared justly amongst all of society.

NO BLAME

As beneficiaries of the industrial age, we suspend judgment on the leadership decisions that have brought us here (taking joint responsibility for where we are). Our vision is future-focused, to be a catalyst for united and creative change to restore climate balance and to make a renewed commitment to care for life on Earth through compassionate and restorative action.

ROLE OF WOMEN TO BRING ABOUT A CULTURAL SHIFT TO BUILD MULTI-PARTY CONSENSUS

We believe that women cannot continue to be marginalised in these discussions and that women's leadership can help clear the way to more collaborative approaches. We have set up the Women's Climate Congress as a national organisation and we are working on plans to promote a national

discussion with elected representatives in each electorate to promote collaborative, nonpartisan action that is firmly directed to secure a safe climate future.

Further information about our Congress, including our principles, vision and values is on our website: <https://womenscongress.weebly.com/>

Addressing polarisation

We notice with concern the polarisation that occurs in the community in response to the issue of how to transition our energy generation to renewable sources. We know that your committee will be petitioned by many individuals and groups who are understandably fearful that if we do not make the adjustments needed fast enough, our children's future will be lost to more severe consequences of climate change. This fear leads to anger which is reflected in the toxic public rhetoric around these issues.

Recently, Women's Climate Congress members met with Mr Neville Power. We discussed how stimulus of the post-COVID economy can support the transition to renewable energy to create a sustainable and inclusive economy for all. In this, we pay regard to international commentators such as Christiana Figueres who have noted that the expenditure of the unprecedented amounts of stimulus money post-COVID will set the path for the planet for the next 20 years or more and will be critical for whether we achieve the Paris targets.

We proposed to Mr Power that rather than taking individual submissions from parties with polarised/different views, it would be more constructive to design a process to bring the different parties together in 'facilitated' conversation to examine the options to reach a consensus that gives business certainty and can be supported by the whole community.

Processes with more meaningful citizen engagement take time but produce policy that is better targeted, more widely accepted and more durable. Acceptance is a key issue, as challenges by disappointed and/or angry stakeholders cause delays, involve expensive legal proceedings and leads to ongoing unresolved polarisation in the community.

Citizen engagement processes have been established in the UK, where a [Climate Assembly](#) has recently reported to the UK parliament, and in France, where a citizen's convention handed recommendations to President Macron earlier this year.

We know that support it unlikely to be forthcoming for a citizen's assembly of this type in Australia at this time; however, with the assistance of professionals well acquainted with processes for bringing people with diverse views together, a community engagement process could be designed specifically for the Australian context. Further details are in the [proposal we submitted to Mr Power](#).

Attendance at October hearing

To discuss these ideas further and how the Congress can help support united action on climate change, we would welcome a chance to speak to the committee in person at your October hearings.

Yours sincerely,

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