

# Darebin Climate Action Now - Annual Report 2023

## Introduction

The following report aims to provide an account of the range of activities DCAN has been involved in over the past year working on community engagement, projects and campaigns at the local, state and national levels.

While it was a welcome relief to be spared any elections this year, many DCAN supporters were heavily involved in supporting the Yes referendum campaign. DCAN believes that there can be no climate justice without justice for First Nations people. Traditional Owners across the nation are leading many local fights against fossil fuel companies and for climate justice.

While the defeat of the referendum has been a heavy blow to First Nations people and the thousands of volunteers supporting the Yes campaign, we feel proud that 65% of the Cooper electorate supported a Yes vote. DCAN looks forward to working with First Nations people in their ongoing quest for justice, truth and treaty.

## Working with Local Council

### Council grant



Following on from last year's highly successful Electric Vehicle project, DCAN was pleased to be awarded another grant from Darebin Council's Community Grants Program. The grant will fund a 'proof of concept' workshop to help support Darebin households 'make the switch' to electric. For this

project we are working in partnership with Energy Freedom Homes – a recently established business in Darebin. The workshop will be held in February next year, so stay tuned for more information.

### Draft Climate Emergency Plan

Since the expiry of the previous Climate Emergency Plan in July 2022, DCAN has taken part in several Council consultations to assist with the development of the new plan. While it is frustrating that the process has

taken such a long time, we remain hopeful that a detailed draft plan will be released for community consultation before the end of the year. DCAN has a representative on the Council's Climate Emergency advisory committee which is also playing a key role in guiding the content of the new plan. In addition, we continue to keep a close eye on Darebin Councillors via the monthly Council meetings, to ensure that their decision making is in line with Darebin's declaration of a climate emergency.

DCAN also participated in the community consultation on Council's 2023/24 Budget and presented a submission at a Council hearing. We voiced our disappointment at the limited community consultation process where community members were asked to prioritise Council spending across very broad areas of activity with scant information.

### **Meeting with the new Darebin CEO**

DCAN met with the newly appointed CEO, Mr. Peter Smith, and Vanessa Petrie, Acting General Manager City Sustainability and Strategy, early in the year to share the range of DCAN activities and highlight the important role the Council has in providing leadership on climate action. We wholeheartedly agreed with Peter's view that climate emergency action needs to be incorporated across all program areas.

Peter has a keen interest in "Place Making" (akin to community development) projects and talked about two such projects in Darebin. He is president of a Global Place Making organisation. We put forward an example of a Place Making project in Glasgow which incorporated a climate lens.

### **Working with Council's climate emergency team**

We continue to enjoy a positive working relationship with Darebin's climate emergency team. We recently met with the team to talk about a range of issues including the climate emergency draft plan, progress on the Electrify Darebin program, place making initiatives, electric vehicles, E-scooters and community batteries.

### **Getting off gas**

Getting off gas was a key priority area for DCAN this year and remains one for the foreseeable future due to the high number of new and expanded projects currently under consideration by the government.



DCAN is an active member of the Beyond Gas Network which focuses on national issues and Gas Free Victoria which is state focussed. In April we met with newly elected Nathan Lambert, MP for Preston, and Kat Theophanous, MP for Northcote, to talk about state policies on gas. We presented them with the Community Gas Retirement Road Map prepared by Friends of the Earth after extensive community consultation. The Road Map is packed with information about gas production and use, along with tips for the Government and householders to switch off gas by 2035.

In July we received the very welcome news that Minister Lily D'Ambrosio had announced a ban on gas connections for all new private residential buildings, making them all-electric. This is something that DCAN has been strongly pushing for in meetings with the Minister and Kat Theophanous. We also welcomed additional announcements by the Minister that future state government buildings will also be gas free. There is of course still much to do, including banning gas for all new developments.

## **Outreach**

### **The chalking collective**



DCAN's weekly chalking collective continued throughout the year. The main aim of the team is to provide information and talk to people on the St Georges Rd bike path about DCAN activities. The team also does some chalking of catchy climate messages on the path and a bit of weeding and litter collection.

The 'Letters to the Editor' team that DCAN is a member of has continued to have an impressive number of letters published in papers across Australia.

## Darebin Library Displays

We were grateful to Darebin Libraries for hosting a DCAN exhibition in the Northcote library. We displayed photos of some of our outreach activities, our 'What is Climate Change?' poster, fence signs and our big banner.

We also displayed two doll's houses filled with soft toy elephants in keeping with our T-shirt motto – "It's the elephant in every room – the climate emergency". We hoped this playful point-maker might attract and entertain some of the younger library visitors! Preston library also hosted a smaller display of DCAN photos and information in their foyer.



## Climate Carnival



A fun and stimulating highlight of the year was DCAN's participation in the two-day Climate Carnival in May organised by Extinction Rebellion Northside and supported by 25 local community groups, and Merri-bek, Yarra and Moonee Valley Councils.

In addition to having a stall at the carnival DCAN also provided speakers, hosted workshops and participated in a wide range of interesting discussions with some outstanding guest speakers



## Working with local Federal and State MPs



We had several meetings throughout the year with our Federal MP for Cooper, Ged Kearney. We also attended meetings of the Climate and Environment Reference Group – Cooper (CERGC) coordinated by Ged’s office. Meetings with MPs are a high priority for DCAN and we appreciate the constructive but frank discussions held.

Issues under discussion have included the need to strengthen the climate Safeguard Mechanism, our strong opposition to fracking in the Beetaloo Basin, the inclusion of gas projects in the proposed Middle Arm development precinct in Darwin, the need to strengthen the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act (by including a climate trigger and broadening the water trigger) and our strong support of the Duty of Care Bill being proposed by Senator David Pocock. More information on these issues and related campaigns can be found below.

### State MPs

As described under the section ‘Getting off gas’, we also met with State MPs Nathan Lambert and Kat Theophanous in which we also put forth our strong support for the protection of native forests. DCAN has also been a strong advocate of the Village Power community battery based in Alphington which was successful in achieving a Victorian State Government grant this year.

## Campaigns

### Strengthening the Climate Safeguards Mechanism

DCAN was proud to play a very active part in this national campaign coordinated by Climate Action Network Australia (CANA). The campaign helped shift the dial to a stronger (albeit far from perfect) Safeguards Mechanism to force the biggest polluting companies to make real cuts to their carbon emissions



Together with a number of local climate groups, DCAN visited the Melbourne headquarters of some of the biggest polluters - ExxonMobil, Shell and BHP - to present them with a letter of demands which was followed up by weekly leafletting outside their offices. We also teamed up with Newlands Parents for Climate Action, Climate4Change,

Neighbours United for Climate Action (NUCA) and Friends of the Earth to meet with local MP Ged Kearney, where we called on her to advocate for stronger safeguards within the Federal Labor parliamentary caucus.

### **Middle Arm development precinct & the Beetaloo Basin**

DCAN was shocked to learn in July that the Federal Government was planning to go ahead with a \$1.5 billion taxpayer-funded subsidy to support development of the Middle Arm industrial precinct in the Northern Territory.

The development precinct will be a major manufacturing hub for gas, petrochemicals, hydrogen and minerals which will pave the way for fracking of the Beetaloo Basin. The Beetaloo Basin is estimated to hold a massive 500 trillion cubic metres of gas. If it goes ahead, it will increase Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 22%, putting beyond reach any hope of zero carbon by 2050.



DCAN joined in the campaign of writing emails and making telephone calls to Senators and our local MP and were heartened when the Senate finally agreed to an inquiry into the Middle Arm development despite twice voting against it. This was a major win for climate campaigners and shows that successful pressure can be brought to bear by emails, letters and phone calls to politicians. DCAN is currently campaigning for an urgent amendment to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act to add shale and tight gas to the water trigger. This would allow the Minister for the Environment to rule against fracking proposals such as Beetaloo.

## **Duty of Care – proposed law**



DCAN has thrown its full support behind the Duty of Care (Climate Change Amendment (Duty of Care and Intergenerational Equity) Bill 2023 proposed by independent Senator David Pocock.

The Bill would impose a duty on Government decision-makers to consider climate harm on young people when making decisions, particularly when it comes to approving fossil fuel projects. The Bill has been drafted in partnership with Anjali Sharma, a leading youth climate activist and the lead litigant in the historic court case, Sharma and others v. Minister for Environment.

DCAN is in the process of developing a submission to the Senate Committee on Environment and Communications which is currently inquiring into the Bill. We are also promoting and circulating a petition to show public support for the Bill to be passed by Parliament early next year.

## **Historic win to end native forest logging**

The State Government's announcement to shut down the native forest logging industry six years earlier than scheduled was a welcome relief to the many campaigners who had fought for decades on this issue.

As a member of the Victorian Forest Alliance we helped out with letterboxing and providing

information to the community on the critical link between climate and the need to protect our remaining native forests. Some of our supporters also put themselves on the front line in the forest to protest against logging.



We congratulate all the forest campaigners who have fought so long and hard for the protection of native forests. Much work continues however to ensure that unique biodiversity is not destroyed via loopholes such as salvaging operations in already depleted forests devastated by fire. The enactment this year of harsh, anti-protest laws involving significant fines and

jail sentences for peaceful forest protectors also remains very concerning. It's an issue we will continue to pursue with state MPs.

### **Office of National Intelligence (ONI) climate-risk assessment**

The Federal Government has been true to its word and completed a national climate risk assessment promised in the lead-up to the last election. It is highly likely that the report will have concluded that the worsening climate crisis presents a grave, and potentially existential, threat to society and human security.



The problem is that only a few Cabinet Ministers have been privy to the report. Such a report is critically important for government and agency planning and needs to be publicly released. Unfortunately, despite national media coverage and pressure from climate groups, including DCAN, the report remains behind closed doors.

### **Submissions**

DCAN regularly provides submissions to inquiries. Special thanks to Jim Crosthwaite for taking the lead in our submissions on gas and providing much needed technical expertise. Over the past year DCAN has made submissions to the following:

- The Essential Services Commission Gas Distribution System Code of Practice – Review
- The Australian Energy Regulator - Access Arrangements 2023-2028 for AGN, Multinet and Ausnet
- The Australian Energy Regulator - Gas Tariff Review
- The Climate Change Authority - Tracking and achieving Australia's emissions reduction targets.
- The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee's Inquiry into the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct



## **Communicating with our supporters**

DCAN's monthly newsletter, the DCAN Dispatch, is our main way of communicating regularly with our 1,325 supporters. The Dispatch is packed with information about DCAN activities, climate information and opportunities to get involved in climate campaigns. Many thanks to our past and current editors.

## **Local, state and national climate action networks**

We have continued to be an active participant in CANA, particularly in the CANA Awesome Grass Roots group comprised of climate groups from around Australia. The group meets on a fortnightly basis and provides much needed morale-boosting, strategic information and creative ideas. Two other important networks are the Victorian Climate Action Network (VCAN) and Darebin Climate Alliance. All three networks provide an invaluable opportunity for DCAN to share information, learn from other groups and coordinate our efforts.

## **Working with other climate groups**

The climate emergency is a local, national and international problem which means DCAN spreads its activities across a whole range of campaigns. We are very fortunate to work with larger groups such as Extinction Rebellion, Friends of the Earth, the Australian Conservation Foundation, 350.org, Market Forces, Environment Victoria, The Australia Institute and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. These groups provide much appreciated support, resources and guidance to community based groups in our campaigning. Singing with the Melbourne Climate Choir is also very restorative for many of us as well as helping to get important climate messages out to the public.

## Thank You!

Thank you to all members of the DCAN Planning Group, our volunteers and supporters. We look forward to continuing our work with you to achieve a safe climate future.



*DCAN acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation as the traditional owners of this land, and that their sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. DCAN commits to working alongside First Nations People as we chart a shared path toward a sustainable future.*