

# School Strike 4 Climate: Thousands of young Australians call for urgent action on climate change

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© Provided by ABC NEWS Thousands of protesters around the country joined the School Strike 4 Climate events. (ABC News: Tim Swanston)

Thousands of students and their supporters walked out of classrooms and workplaces to join School Strike 4 Climate events around the country, becoming part of a global youth-led movement pleading for urgent action on climate change.

Attendees made their way to large rallies in the CBDs of every Australian capital city on Friday, with events also planned in dozens of rural and regional areas, from Alice Springs to Atherton.

Organisers are demanding the federal government turn its back on emissions-intensive energy sources, including by:

- Resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that guarantee land rights
- Funding the creation of secure jobs that fast-track solutions to the climate crisis
- Funding projects that transition the economy to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030

Taking place in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, all events were arranged with input from relevant state and territory health authorities, according to organisers.

There were loud cries for change, stories of grief and witty signs in abundance.

Here's what happened across the nation.

Throngs of protesters in **Sydney** braved the rain to march from Sydney Town Hall to Prince Alfred Park to make their voices heard.

A key issue for many in attendance was the federal government's recent announcement that it would spend \$600

Protest organisers said they were hopeful between 5,000 and 10,000 people would attend the events in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, and crowds in the harbour city were estimated to reach well into the thousands.

Hundreds of businesses around the country temporarily closed to take part in the action.

Further north in **Darwin**, crowds also spoke up about local issues, many of them drawing attention to plans to develop the Beetaloo Basin gas field.

"The government is putting in a gas-led recovery for COVID, and that's not what we're striking for. We're striking for renewable energy," 16-year-old Leila Higgins said.

About 150 students and supporters gathered outside the city's Parliament House, and some of them said they were bitterly disappointed by an apparent lack of action.

"I think we're all extremely frustrated, especially as young people, that we're still having to come down and do these strikes," 17-year-old Bridgette Davies said.

Protesters had to be turned away from the event in **Hobart** from about lunchtime, after the event reached its capacity of 1,000 people.

Some Tasmanians who made it in spoke about the need to protect the state's pristine natural areas, on which the local tourism industry depends.

Hundreds of people in **Canberra** gathered to make similar demands, including calls for more investment in renewable energy.

Organisers of the **Adelaide** event said about 2,000 students and young people rallied at Victoria Square before heading to King William Street, blocking traffic as they marched.

Helen Taylor's son, Leif Justham, was killed by a truck as he cycled around Australia raising awareness about global warming.

She told the rally she intended to carry on his legacy.

"Together, we thought the only thing we can do is try and share his story as far and as wide as he can so that even though *nothing* will bring him back, at least he'll live on through others and through his story," she said.

Thousands of people also turned out to **Melbourne's** Treasury Gardens before marching through the CBD, where a number of roads were blocked off to make way for the students.

Some in attendance told the ABC they were too young to vote, so were choosing to protest so their voices could be heard.

The protest drew smaller crowds than a much larger event in 2019, with protesters donning masks, keeping their distance and using hand sanitiser in a bid to remain COVID safe.

One protester, Tuan, arrived in full personal protective gear.

"The climate crisis is a health crisis — that's why I'm dressed in PPE," he said.

Thiruavana Arunchalamelanthral, a Year 12 student at Melbourne Girls College and the environment captain, dismissed comments from detractors that the students should have stayed at school.

"To be honest I have learned a lot more stuff at the strike than I learned in the classroom," she said.

At the event in **Brisbane**, hundreds of people gathered in King George Square to demand no new coal, oil or gas projects.

It was a similar scene in **Perth**, where people gathered on the Supreme Court gardens to demand the Morrison government switch its gas-fired COVID-19 economic recovery plan to a renewable energy one.

They also want oil and gas company Woodside to abandon plans for its Scarborough gas project in the state's north.

Organiser Mena Tabshabar said the government's climate inaction left her with no option but to act.

"The government is currently investing billions of dollars of public money into the gas industry," Ms Tabshabar said.

"The choice will have disastrous consequences for both the economy and the environment."

Some students said their schools dissuaded them from attending, while others said their schools were very supportive even allowing the posting of flyers about the event on school grounds.

Earlier this week, a report by the International Energy Agency found immediate action was needed to meet a target net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 — including no new investment in new oil, gas and coal projects.

A day later, the federal government was slammed by environmental groups for announcing the \$600 million Hunter Valley power station.

The government is also tipping tens of millions of dollars into fast-tracking the development of the gas-rich Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory, a key pillar of its planned recovery from the coronavirus-induced economic downturn.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison recently said the nation remained on track to meet its Paris Agreement target of a 26 to 28 per cent reduction on the country's emissions from 2005 levels by 2030.

But he came under pressure at a recent global climate summit to set a more ambitious target, as several other countries did.

The next round of global climate talks — where emissions reduction strategies are likely to be reviewed and updated — is due to take place in Scotland in November.

**Video: Thousands of students strike for climate change (9News.com.au)**

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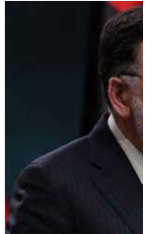
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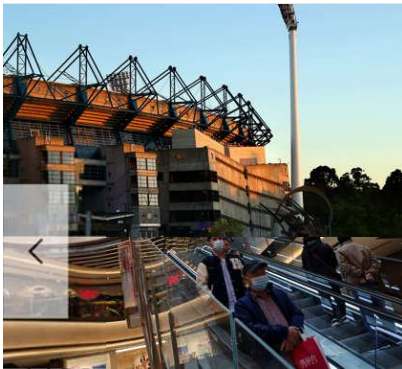
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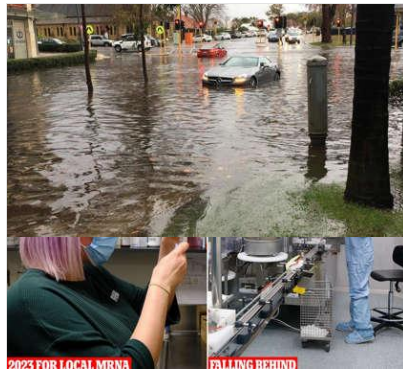
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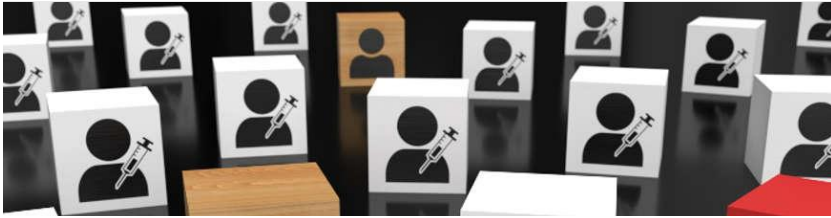
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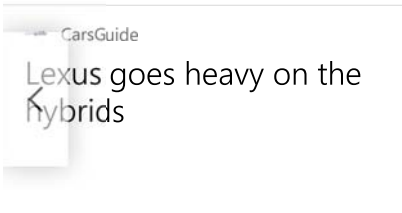
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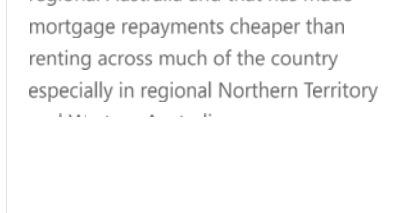
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