

We Stand Here

*Penny D Sackett
12-Feb-2019
Stop Adani – Climate Action Now Rally
Parliament House, Canberra*

We stand here – today – in a climate emergency.

The increased energy caused by global warming is permanently melting land and sea ice.

Ocean and atmospheric currents have been disrupted, rerouting extreme weather.

Sea levels are rising at faster and faster rates.

Bush fire seasons have become longer, fires more intense, and the areas they burn larger.

Both droughts and flooding are more severe.

The number of storms with winds stronger than 250 kilometres per hour has tripled since 1980.

This past month in Australia has been a shocker with wild fires in Tasmania, unprecedented heat waves across the whole continent, 100-year floods in Queensland, and violent storms wreaking damage and taking out power across the southeast.

We stand here today in a climate emergency.

Which were the five hottest years for the surface of the Earth since modern temperature recording began? 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

The five coldest years were all recorded more than 100 years ago.

If you are 40 years old or younger – and about 2/3 of the world's population is – you have never lived a single year in which the average global temperature was below average by 20th century standards.

We know, and for decades have known, that the release of carbon dioxide from human fossil fuel use is the main cause of the global warming that is changing our Earth's climate.

Yet carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues to increase. More than that, the *rate* at which it is increasing *is itself increasing*.

We are accelerating toward disaster.

In order to avert humanity's collision course with that disaster, we must take our heavy foot off the fossil fuel accelerator. Now.

We stand here today in a climate emergency.

A temperature increase of more than 1.5 to 2 degrees, compared to pre-industrial times, will push the Earth's systems beyond conditions seen for at least the last 100,000 years.

Warming is already halfway to that limit, with more on its way when the full effect of the carbon that we have *already* released is fully felt.

It may still be possible to hold global warming below 2.0 degrees, but only if we reach net zero emissions before we exceed the total carbon budget that Nature has set.

There is no negotiating with the laws of physics and chemistry.

Unfortunately, we have already missed our best chance of holding warming to 1.5C.

This is because as the Earth warms, the oceans and land are no longer able to absorb the same fraction of our carbon emissions that they have in the past to keep them from entering the atmosphere.

When these “carbon-feedback” effects are taken into account, calculations show that we may have already consumed our 1.5 degrees carbon budget.

And the situation for limiting warming to 2 degrees is not much better.

Considering the weakening ability of oceans and land to absorb some of our carbon emissions, the small remaining 2 degree carbon budget may be spent by about 2030, in just over ten years time.

That's why I say:

We stand here today in a climate emergency.

We cannot decrease greenhouse gas emissions by continuing to increase them.

Simply put, we must stop feeding the fossil fuel elephant. Full stop.

The fossil fuel reserves that are already being exploited contain more than enough carbon to consume the world's remaining 2 degree carbon budget.

Our next actions will shape the future of the Earth and its inhabitants for centuries – potentially millennia.

The climate has tipping points beyond which lies an irreversible path to a new and dangerous state.

To prevent that outcome, we must cross a *social* tipping point that redirects action and resources away from private pockets and toward the public good.

We can begin by demanding the first and necessary step to limiting global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius.

We stand here today, in a climate emergency, to demand:

A complete ban on any new fossil fuel development, anywhere on the planet, effectively *immediately*.