

COTA ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY STATEMENT LAUNCH

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A Youth Perspective on Environmental Legacy

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To young people today, environmental legacy is more than just a concept. It is something that not only affects us, but defines our futures. The legacy left to us by our forebears controls the possibilities in our lives and currently that legacy is not shaping up particularly well.

I became involved in environmentalism and climate action because I saw what was happening in our world and I didn't want to see it continue. In early 2009 I was sixteen, beginning year 12. I cared a lot about the environment but I'd never really done anything tangible. After helping defend my home and community in north-central Victoria from the deadly Black Saturday bushfires, I realised that climate change isn't just something that might happen to polar bears in the distant future. It is something that is already having noticeable impacts on the world around us. I became extremely angry that our leaders were telling us that Australia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, couldn't afford to act on climate change, when 173 lives were lost and many more devastated in an extreme bushfire - which would only become more likely without climate action. The generation ahead of mine were leaving my peers and I with an awful mess, and not doing anything to clean it up. I knew that it wasn't what we deserved. I know that we have a right to grow and prosper in a world like our parents, grandparents and all those who came before us have enjoyed.

At the AYCC, we know that we are the first generation who will face the impacts of climate change on our everyday lives. We know that we, as Australians living in a high-polluting first-world country, have a duty to prevent the worst impacts of climate change from affecting those who are least responsible: those in developing nations, and the people of the future.

However, we know we can't do it alone. As young people, we know we can be a moral voice, reminding people that environmental issues affect people in real life - their children. You, as green sages, can offer the voice of wisdom and experience, without the vested interests in continuing to pollute that so many people have.

I've heard it said that denying the existence of climate change is not only factually, scientifically wrong, it's bad parenting. And bad grandparenting, and bad great-grandparenting. So thank you, **Green Sages**, for being those in your generation willing to stand up with the vision, passion and empathy to help ensure that the world you leave us with is a world we can live in.