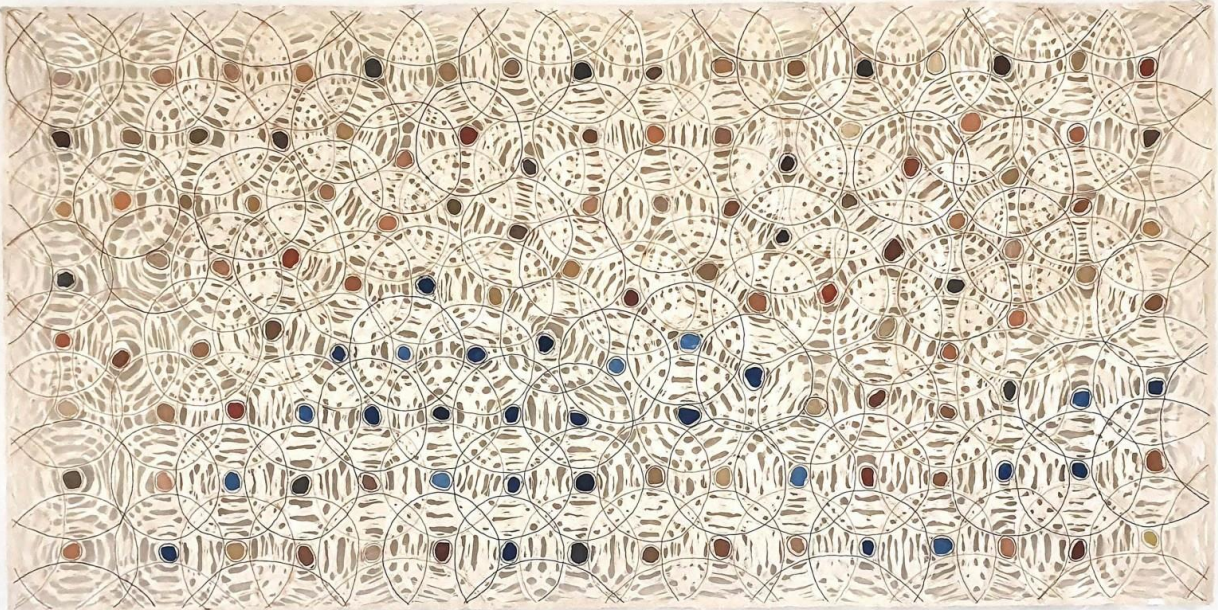




Women's  
CLIMATE CONGRESS

WEAVING THE THREADS TOGETHER  
A combined harvest from Stage One  
August to November 2021



**Artwork:** Sally Blake, 'Interconnected', 2020. Mexican amate paper, plant-dye wool, linen and silk. 240 x 120 cm. 'Interconnected' explores the connections between all living things. [Sally Blake](#) is a Canberra artist and a member of the 'Integrating the arts' circle of the Women's Climate Congress.

## Contents

The Weaving the threads together project .....	3
How this project links with the National Congress of Women .....	3
Harvest of Stage One of WTT .....	3
Figure 1: Weaving the Threads Together Stage One at a glance .....	4
A snapshot of WTT Stage One .....	5
Women rising .....	6
Collaborating for change .....	6
Changes we would like to see .....	7
Appendix: Combined harvests from all WTT circles.....	9
Background on the Women’s Climate Congress.....	22

# The Weaving the threads together project

## How this project links with the National Congress of Women

The *Weaving the threads together* project aims to give as many women as possible the chance to contribute their thoughts and ideas to the National Congress of Women (NCW) hosted by the Women's Climate Congress (WCC) over 2021-22. The NCW comprises two one-day online events: *Women rising. Why women? Why now?* on 30 November 2021 and *How can we collaborate across difference to restore climate balance?* on 28 April 2022 culminating in a two-day face-to-face gathering in Canberra on 11 and 12 September 2022.

Through this National Congress we aspire to generate a movement for a collaborative national plan on climate change – a plan to bring the nation together and restore care for the Earth and nurture of life to the centre of all our action on climate. As part of the Congress, *Weaving the threads together* (WTT) invites any woman who wants to have her say to do so. We offer this opportunity in the hope that it will be empowering and satisfying for women to talk together about these issues knowing that other women are doing the same. The outcomes will contribute to a declaration from women, produced at the end of the November Congress, calling for united action on climate change. We would love to hear from women in every electorate in Australia through this project and we would also love as many women as possible to [join us at the National Congress](#).

## Harvest of Stage One of WTT

Stage One comprised a series of hosted women's circles held in the run-up to the *Women rising* event. Around 50 women met in 11 circles held online and face-to-face in locations around Australia from September to November 2021. They considered these questions:

- **Women rising** When you envision women rising for climate action what do you see? Who and how are people leading? What has changed? What systemic changes are needed to make this happen?
- **Collaboration** How can we influence the public and political culture to make collaboration on climate action possible? Share any examples of collaboration across difference that you admire.
- **Renewal** To continue to be able to enjoy the places on Earth that we love now and in the future what must we do as individuals, in our communities and as a nation? If you were looking back from 2031, what would you have done that would give you most pride?

Harvests from each conversation were sent to the WCC and then collated into one document.

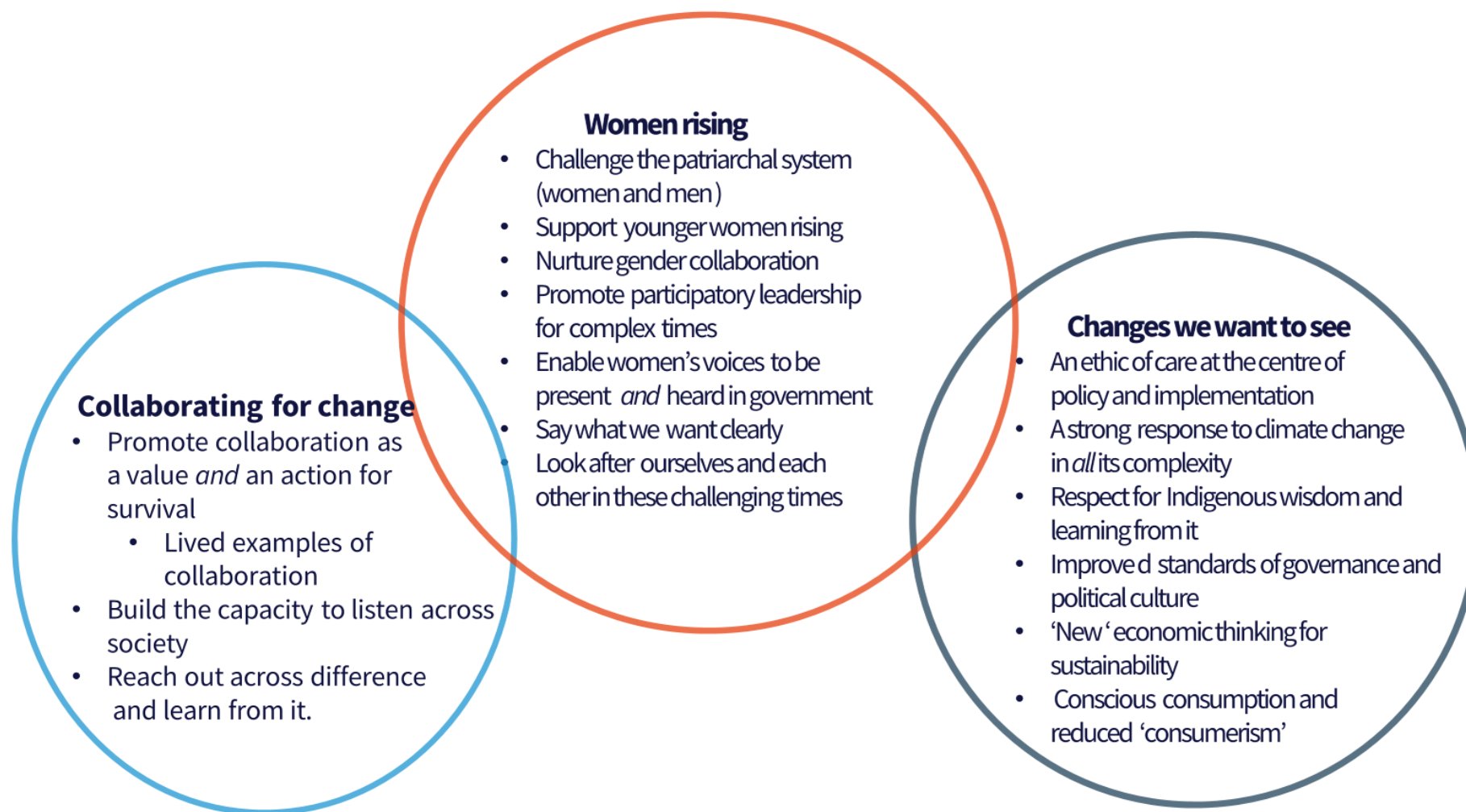
- The 'At a glance' diagram on page 3 provides a quick overview of the themes that emerged
- The Snapshot page 5 provides a taster of tone of the conversations under each theme
- The Appendix page 9 provides the complete harvest of all conversation circles.

The WTT project will contribute, along with other input gained from the *Women rising* event and other upcoming WCC activities, to inform a public declaration from participants about what is needed to restore climate balance and protect life on Earth for current and future generations. Stage Two of WTT, which will focus on collaboration for change, will be announced shortly.

We thank all women who hosted and attended these circles. Your aspirations, wisdom and warmth inspire us. At the same time not all of the views expressed here reflect the non- adversarial approach of the WCC and not all of the views here are in agreement. We acknowledge this and respect the right of women to express their views. We understand the anger and frustration that can arise for women from our current situation and we continue our commitment to listen and to hear those who do not fully agree with us.

Further comments on these issues are always welcome. Contact us at [womensclimatecongress@gmail.com](mailto:womensclimatecongress@gmail.com)

Figure 1: Weaving the Threads Together Stage One at a glance



# A snapshot of WTT Stage One

## Women rising

### Challenge the patriarchal system for the good of women and men

*One of the worst things with the patriarchal system is that misogyny saps confidence. We need to deal with imposter syndrome where women still believe that they don't have a right to step into these leadership roles. Lack of self-worth is inherently adopted by women, like, 'I'm not worthy to step up, I'm not worthy to use my voice'.*

*It's a cultural thing that blokes can't hear women's voices. They have tuned us out. The patriarchy has only existed for 5000 years – a blip in human history.*

*When a woman's idea is put forward in a group of men and it's dismissed only to be picked up by a man five minutes later and accepted, we need to stand up – 'No, you did not hear me/ her. I/ she said those words'. ... Just speaking up about it is quite radical. We need to challenge the internalisation of shrinking ourselves.*

*When I hear that women just need to be stronger and louder, part of me can see that, but another part goes, 'Hang on, why should we have to change to be heard in that system?' Because there are presumably many other groups that are not being heard as well. So I see the extent to which women are heard as a bit of an indicator of how a whole range of people are heard. If privileged women like us got better at being heard, it might just make it even harder for others, because it hasn't changed what it means to really listen and to have a system that serves diverse values across all people.*

*The anger of #MeToo is understandable but anger can't be the ONLY thing that takes us forward. We want women to rise as authentic selves embodied with the full range of their emotions and capacities.*

### Support younger women rising

*As young women we want to be able to enjoy the environments we love in the future. Children learn at school about climate change and there's an increasing sense of frustration and anger about the lack of action. We have known for a long time what is happening but the older generation hasn't acted with any urgency about climate change. Words need to be reflected in actions.*

*Young people are so much more environmentally aware than 30 years ago and have so much knowledge often learned at school about climate change and environmental degradation. Severn Cullis-Suzuki was only 12 when she [spoke at the Rio Conference in 1992](#)*

### Nurture gender collaboration

*I am uncomfortable with seeing women as having some kind of quality that men don't have and about women working without men – particularly those who support participatory ways of thinking.*

*As bell hooks wrote, the patriarchy does violence to men as well as to women.*

*How do I bring up my two young sons to be loving and responsible men – aware of their privilege but free from shame?*

*We need to flesh out this notion of 'gender collaboration'.*

**Enable women's voices to be present *and* heard in government.**

*... Women from all sides of parliament [have] shared the experience of not being heard. There was a kind of 'cultural deafness' to women's voices. Parliament was set up by men and [is] run to suit them. It has a misogynistic culture which belittles and trivialises women's input. The leadership of women can get hijacked when they have to deal with misogyny among other issues. Julia Gillard is a prime example.*

*Equal representation could assist with changing the style of parliament but we can't just rely on women in political parties to do the heavy lifting; we need forums or collaborations outside of that.*

*Many more women stand as representatives in local and federal politics through the independents movement. [This] seems like a place to start.*

*The Women's Caucus idea would be fabulous in Australia. Women need to be on the side of women and supporting each other in aspirations and leadership.*

**Be clear about what we want**

*When the sh\*t hits [the] fan, it would be good to be sitting here with some well-formed ideas about self-management, self-government, and the policies needed to guard our children's future. We need to talk together about how we would conceive and shape a good and just society.*

*If women are going to rise, we need a structural offering (not just [an] emotive message). Something that is recognised as necessary. In education they've done research on structural change and it doesn't do a damn thing. It's cultural change that makes a difference.*

*The timeframe is urgent. 2030, even 2050, is not very far away. As well as better leadership we need resistance. WCC may work to change the system in a non-adversarial way but others may choose more visible protest. This is also needed.*

*As well as carrot we need some stick – legislated targets, international trade agreements with penalties for non-compliance on climate action. Litigation has potentially an important role in raising awareness and enabling change.*

**Recognise that personal change and challenging times require self-care**

*There is a sense of urgency with climate action calls and the challenge to be a 'troublemaker'. This can lead to chronic stress in life and body. We can feel burdened by our expectations of ourselves and the enormity of the task of trying to make the world a better place. We need to be kind to ourselves and acknowledge our own contribution is worthwhile.*

*Our lifestyles are still so harmful. I don't want to lose sight of that reality while also not beating myself up about it as this is the society we have been born into and it is how we have to function and interact... I try and do no harm.*

*At the grassroots level, people are contributing in little ways: recycling, dietary changes, composting, using energy-efficient appliances and electric heating/cooling, ethical purchasing etc.*

## Collaborating for change

**Promote collaboration as a value *and* as action for survival**

*The idea that climate change is a divisive thing is really crazy. We're all in this together. Collaboration is going to be needed regardless of the outcome of climate change – to mitigate its affects or to work with what remains.*

	<p><i>If we think of ‘partnership’ as the new leadership, collaboration and participation become key in the new world we want to see and for our survival. Individualism is not the way forward.</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration requires working on our personal attributes – we need psychological flexibility. Even with consensus processes it is hard to achieve shared understanding. We need more conversations where people are listened to across difference.</i></p> <p><i>We need to work inside and outside the system... Those inside the system have power but no time; those outside have time but less power. Perhaps there is room for collaboration here.</i></p> <p>Note: Participants shared examples of collaborative processes and these are listed in the Appendix. Collaboration will be a main theme of Day Two of the National Congress of Women on 28 April 2022.</p>
<p><b>Build the capacity to listen</b></p>	<p><i>What is lacking is the critical ability of those who can make decisions to hear. It is not just up to us to make the change in how we speak, there is something about the system [that] is not geared to hearing... Our systems are structured to be polarised... Our media [and] parliament are not structured like these circles for deliberative, appreciative dialogue. We don’t see that in our public discourse.</i></p>
<p><b>Reach out to and learn from difference</b></p>	<p><i>I don’t agree with the degree to which cancelling and censoring are taking place. We should be able to talk about issues as opposed to just being shut down because we’re not sure or questioning issues. Whether we are talking about COVID, racism or gender issues I think we need to find ways beyond shutting people down or micro-managing individuals’ behaviour. We need to be a questioning society, at the same time as building warmth and depth.</i></p> <p><i>It’s about shifting the culture to one that is more caring and more cooperating and can deal with complexity.</i></p>

## Changes we would like to see

<p><b>An ethic of care at the centre of policy and implementation</b></p>	<p><i>Putting an ethic of care as the basis of your decisions positions everything in a slightly different way. So [for example], leadership training around an ethic of care would look quite different to the kinds of leadership training that you do to work in a hierarchical, competitive system. So also with decision-making. If we do take this ethic of care seriously, it means a total transformation of society.</i></p> <p><i>As well as having more women in political leadership, we need decision-making that is more aligned to an ethic of care, to the environment, to climate, to biodiversity, to human and non-human life.</i></p> <p><i>One condition needed to shift the systems and encourage collaboration involves the need to value care and foster social, ecological systems of care, from self to community and environment. How do we come back to caring in the face of chronic stress and a sense of urgency?</i></p>
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<p><b>A strong response to climate change in all its complexity</b></p>	<p><i>If more people understand that climate change is complex that's a start. The environment is a web of interconnections. Nature supports life on the planet and we are part of nature. We can't continue to exploit nature without consequences. If we don't act to protect nature we can expect the consequences: poor physical and mental health outcomes, increased costs of combating climate change, loss of biodiversity, war over resources, and ultimately human demise.</i></p> <p><i>Climate change is complex – we can't just change one thing and think everything will be okay, so we feel overwhelmed and don't know how to respond. There is a political tendency to apply simple solutions to complex problems.</i></p>
<p><b>Respect for Indigenous wisdom and deep learning from it</b></p>	<p><i>From links with Indigenous women the idea of gender collaboration, rather than gender equity, has emerged – an honouring of men's business and of women's business. There's a partnership between the two that is equal. This idea is not pervasive in our culture. Gender equity is often for women to become equal to men, in a male-designed system. We need a redesigned system for proper gender collaboration.</i></p>
<p><b>Improved standards of governance and political culture</b></p>	<p><i>If you want real change it's not enough to advocate within the current parliamentary system. There are many things wrong with it and this is relevant to our conversation. There's no transparency, accountability or leadership, really. The way democracy is structured protects men's interests or the patriarchy. As long as we have that system, it doesn't matter who is prime minister, they might do things slightly nicer, but basically, they're captured by the same system.</i></p>
<p><b>'New' economic thinking for sustainability</b></p>	<p><i>We must remain vigilant against attempts to see the climate debate as a subset of the economy. It should be the other way round. If there is no sustainable climate, there will be no environment for an economy or society to exist, let alone progress.</i></p> <p><i>Kate Raworth says in 'Doughnut Economics' that humanity's 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. Climate change is one aspect of this.</i></p>
<p><b>Conscious consumption and reduced consumerism</b></p>	<p><i>Women and girls are targeted with fast fashion and have been conditioned to unnecessary consumption because of pressure to be 'attractive, successful and accepted'. We need to change this perception to change behaviour and to validate minimalist consumption and lifestyle choices.</i></p> <p><i>We are part of nature and have a responsibility to future generations to preserve the natural environment. We can relearn sustainability from Indigenous people and unlearn endless materialism.</i></p>



# Appendix: Combined harvests from all WTT circles

## WOMEN RISING

### Women (and men) need to challenge the patriarchal system

- It is horrifying that one of the leadership courses I did [not that long ago] included a unit on stereotyping. We learned how to look credible, use a lower voice, so we could be heard in meetings. How shocking that we have to teach women to act like men.
- Women tend to be more polite and have been socialised to not rock the boat/ [to] fit in. We need to get over it! Start disrupting things! Speak from a deep place of being a woman.
- The beauty of women talking together [is] that we can comfortably express vulnerability and build trust. Brené Brown says vulnerability is the birthplace of creativity.
- When I hear that women just need to be stronger and louder, part of me can see that, but another part goes, 'Hang on, why should we have to change to be heard in that system?' Because there are presumably many other groups that are not being heard as well. So I see the extent to which women are heard as a bit of an indicator of how a whole range of people are heard. If privileged women like us got better at being heard, it might just make it even harder for others, because it hasn't changed what it means to really listen and to have a system that serves diverse values across all people.
- The anger of #MeToo is understandable but anger can't be the ONLY thing that takes us forward. We want women to rise as authentic selves embodied with the full range of their emotions and capacities. As a second wave feminist, I've been very confronted by the #MeToo movement, and the recognition that when we thought, for example, achieving sexual freedom was going to liberate us, in reality it became almost another instrument of oppression from the patriarchy.
- It's a cultural thing that blokes can't hear women's voices. They have tuned us out. The patriarchy has only existed for 5000 years – a blip in human history.
- [A] collaborative, non-partisan approach is fundamental. But at the same time the issues are urgent and there is a lot to be angry about. How can we be strong without buying in to the patriarchal system?
- I loved the reframing around what would be different if as women we could be ourselves. The former Chief Scientist at CSIRO said she had a wonderful career and yet still asked what it would have been like if she could have been herself rather than having to change in order to fit in and be heard.
- One of the worst things with the patriarchal system is that misogyny saps confidence. We need to deal with imposter syndrome where women still believe that they don't have a right to step into these leadership roles. Lack of self-worth is inherently adopted by women, like, 'I'm not worthy to step up, I'm not worthy to use my voice'. Every woman needs to do the inner work to realise that the self-worth is there. All the programs that subconsciously get fed to us as women growing up, [telling us] that we're not equal, or we're not worthy to step up into taking action – all of that is something that I want to see change. Women need to know that their ideas are valid and [that] what they have to say is important, and that they've just as much a right to be there as men.
- When a woman's idea is put forward in a group of men and it's dismissed only to be picked up by a man five minutes later and accepted, we need to stand up – 'No, you did not hear me/ her. I/ she said those words'. ... In Julia Gillard's book even women in national leadership positions had that experience. Just speaking up about it is quite radical. We need to challenge the internalisation of shrinking ourselves.

### Younger women rising

- As young women we want to be able to enjoy the environments we love in the future. Children learn at school about climate change and there's an increasing sense of frustration and anger about the lack of

action. We have known for a long time what is happening but the older generation hasn't acted with any urgency about climate change. Words need to be reflected in actions.

- There are big intergenerational justice issues. The inaction of 20 years may have contributed to a sense in older people that the problems are overstated and/ or the scale of change now required overwhelms them, [but] the young know better. We need to act.
- Nothing has changed since as a girl I first became aware of climate change. At school we learnt the 3Rs – recycle, reduce, reuse. But in broader society, this thinking is not widespread, an example being waste in health system. [In that system] there is complete lack of thinking about using recyclable materials.
- Young people are so much more environmentally aware than 30 years ago and have so much knowledge often learned at school about climate change and environmental degradation. Severn Cullis-Suzuki was only 12 when she [spoke at the Rio Conference in 1992](#).
- A book published in 2016 assessed the 100 best things to do globally to reverse global warming. Education of girls and family planning figured in the top 10.
- School strikers are calling out for help from older generations. We've left it to the kids to lead the way and I'm shamed by that. They are just kids and we should be protecting *them*.
- Younger women are not aspiring to politics i.e. you can't be what you can't see, and understandably they fear the responses by media and men. Julia Gillard was bullied and demolished ('Ditch the witch').
- Older people like us have to listen to young people – their anger about the slowness of change and fears for their future are justified. Their protests, even though their language and tactics are sometimes confrontational and divisive, raise the importance of action.

## Gender collaboration is a just way forward

- I am uncomfortable with seeing women as having some kind of quality that men don't have and about women working without men – particularly those who support participatory ways of thinking. Not all the women will act with care for the Earth and life. Nevertheless I think that women are the key to the changes we need.
- As bell hooks wrote, the patriarchy does violence to men as well as to women.
- How do I bring up my two young sons to be loving and responsible men – aware of their privilege but free from shame? We need to give care and attention to young men growing up with these changes. It's important for young men as well as young women to be exposed to these ideas. The toxicity that sometimes expresses itself from men... seems to rise from notions of what it means to be a man or the ways in which they were brought up with explicit or implicit violence.
- We need fundamental change in how the genders work together. Perhaps we need to break down the idea of gender altogether. Young people think in terms of gender fluidity [and] then all of this becomes less relevant.
- We need to flesh out this notion of 'gender collaboration'. Is there something to learn from Indigenous philosophy (around complementary roles – women's business, men's business) here?

## Participatory leadership is needed to deal with complexity

- The western idea of leadership is hierarchical and competitive. It implies that some are better than others. Leadership is not just about who's at the top, it is about creating an environment where everyone can take leadership, no matter where they are in the system.
- The complexity we face requires participatory leadership and partnership. The current focus on individual leadership and agency is not fit for purpose. Hierarchical cut-through is good for quick decisions but doesn't foster the true participation and flexibility needed when the system is dynamic and complex. In a culture of complexity influencing and stewardship are key leadership skills.
- In complex times we need distributed leadership in our parliamentary systems and how we work with each other. Distributed leadership has many centres with agency, not just a central figure. Sometimes people will be out front, and sometimes following, depending on what is needed.

- Talking about leadership out of context makes me uncomfortable – you can lead people into danger. What kind of leadership do we want and need? Has there got to be a person out front looking and acting as though she is the leader? Or do we just want people who are visionaries, who can come up with ideas and can motivate other people to do things?
- It's complicated. One thing I liked about the early women's movement was its collective nature. We do need people who make things happen, but if you've got people who do that, what does that do to everyone else? Are they going to feel that they're not important so they're too afraid to speak out?
- We need leadership practices that listen to all voices – and know what that means. That is sorely lacking in parliament but also in so many other domains. The problem is not about ability to articulate but there is a cultural deafness to listening [and] that is something that needs to change.
- We need leaders of whatever gender who have heart, are apolitical, have passion and can communicate the need to care for this planet [that] we only hold in trust for future generations.

## We need women's voices not just present but *heard* in government

- In the recent documentary, 'Ms Represented', women from all sides of parliament shared the experience of not being heard. There was a kind of 'cultural deafness' to women's voices. Parliament was set up by men and [is] run to suit them. It has a misogynistic culture which belittles and trivialises women's input. The leadership of women can get hijacked when they have to deal with misogyny among other issues. Julia Gillard is a prime example.
- Women rising includes being embodied, valuing care [and] emotion, and then acting from that place. Angela Merkel is a good role model. [She is] calm and polite but very strong and she rose above the media barbs (for example, about her clothes). Some other women in politics are treated as insignificant.
- Equal representation could assist with changing the style of parliament but we can't just rely on women in political parties to do the heavy lifting; we need forums or collaborations outside of that to move things forward. We need diverse women's voices – including the voices of young women.
- WCC is not doing what the 'Voices for' movement is doing, or [what] the Women for Election Australia movement [is doing], although we support their work. We are about changing the whole system.
- In our political system, there are too many men and it's corrupt – not to say women can't be corrupt. So just getting a woman in doesn't automatically mean the system is going to work for us. But women generally take up more of the caring role in our society and do a lot of that invisible care and invisible work, but don't get heard. And we need to create that balance urgently. We need to put women at the centre, but also take a very collaborative approach. A lot of this is relational work and we need to build the relational infrastructure to support it. There are role models – like Helen Haines and Cathy McGowan.
- Many more women stand as representatives in local and federal politics through the independents movement. [This] seems like a place to start. Women who care can make a lot of difference.
- Talking with other women, we feel our strength coming back. What difference would the support of other women have made in parliament? In 'Ms Represented', [Natasha] Stott-Despoja said she was disappointed she did not meet the sisterhood in parliament.
- The Women's Caucus idea would be fabulous in Australia. Women need to be on the side of women and supporting each other in aspirations and leadership.

## Being clear about what we want

- This might be one of those points in history where massive change is possible. Greater gender equity may be one part of the puzzle, but it is not the complete answer. Nasty crashes are coming – they will shake up the system. There may be opportunities for radical change. Be ready to notice the tipping points – be prepared with ideas and actions.

- When the sh\*t hits [the] fan, it would be good to be sitting here with some well-formed ideas about self-management, self-government, and the policies needed to guard our children's future. We need to talk together about how we would conceive and shape a good and just society.
- Strategy defines the tactics and action. We need to define the task. What is most special and precious and important and how can we preserve it.
- Bringing about a more collaborative rather than competitive approach would change the system. You can't just have a woman as prime minister and hope for the best. You can't have a system based entirely on competition. Once you start with competition, it just overtakes everything else.
- Revolution doesn't necessarily bring the change you hope for. As a movement, as an organisation, we do need to think about what we want. What it is that we want to create, [and] the tools and values [we need] to get there. Otherwise it's just story.
- So, what is the ideal and do you compromise on the way to that ideal? Or do you start small and just go for one or two areas? The massiveness of the problem can be overwhelming. It's easier to deal with just one or two areas, but you need fundamental change in the broader policy too.
- If women are going to rise, we need a structural offering (not just [an] emotive message). Something that is recognised as necessary. In education they've done research on structural change and it doesn't do a damn thing. It's cultural change that makes a difference.
- Structural and cultural change is needed. Culture was huge in Indi. Involving young people, having fun – having fun [is] so important to do away with the image of oppressed woman tied to [the] kitchen sink.
- Structure and culture are hard to separate. We could form groups to talk about these things. Think of plans, designs, projections, so we have something circulating for people to think about.
- The timeframe is urgent. 2030, even 2050, is not very far away. As well as better leadership we need resistance. WCC may work to change the system in a non-adversarial way but others may choose more visible protest. This is also needed. [The] Women's March 4 Justice was invigorating and enlivening. Do we need more of this? [We] need some radical action too.
- Engage more with our politicians. Go and see them and talk about climate change. Consider linking state and federal in collaborative conversation.
- Women can be button-pressers! Accept the risk to 'make trouble'. Question our perceptions of conflict as being 'trouble'/ bad. What is the role of anger?
- We need bottom-up grassroots action and top-down [action]. It all counts.

## Education and information are critical

- We need to explain to people in a readily understood way where our food comes from, what it contains and what it does to us if it is not organic or biodynamic. Ditto with fibres.
- Because climate change is not so immediate people don't truly understand the impacts. We need more explaining of what the problems are [and] what will happen if we don't act.
- How can we put climate change – all the consequences (displacing people, relocating people, jobs, repairs, insurance etc.), all those hassles – at the fore? The disruption – we responded to that for COVID. How to make that real for people for climate change?
- And then there's that whole concept of new power. Jeremy Hines, one of the founders of GetUp!, wrote a book called 'New Power', which is about how you spread an idea. Like the Ice Bucket Challenge. How do you spread the memes? You may need to let go of your own brand.
- Education is key for long-term change – teach people at a young age about how to live intentionally [and] peacefully, to care for each other and care for the Earth.
- Getting systems change to happen goes back to the education of young people and supporting teachers. There's curriculum, and there's a lot of other important things that they don't get time to do. In schools they are certainly raising awareness of climate and environmental issues, but because they depend on government funding, this shapes the subjects that they teach.

- Good analytical skills are so important given the level of scaremongering and misinformation about climate change. We shouldn't be frightened of contested ideas and being able to say, 'I don't know but I will use resources to find out'.

## Carrots and sticks?

- As well as carrot we need some stick – legislated targets, international trade agreements with penalties for non-compliance on climate action. Litigation has potentially an important role in raising awareness and enabling change. The Torres Strait Islanders have launched action in the Federal Court alleging that the government has failed to protect First Nations owners living on the front line of climate change, and in March 2021 a group of eight teenagers launched a class action arguing that the federal Environment Minister had 'a duty of care' to protect future generations. [There's also the] Environmental Defenders Office and its successful actions to protect wildlife, people and places.
- Could/ should the net zero target be included in legislation? It locks future governments in and provides the necessary discipline and focus for making the structural changes necessary.
- It's not just about threats, it's [about] going in with solutions to protect biodiversity, less reliance on chemicals, and greater use of green energy. [Consider] [Polly Higgins' Ecocide Law](#).
- Living and working in agricultural areas where farm management practices include widespread use of chemicals, it is easy to see poor biology in soil with detrimental impacts on livestock and cropping.
- Industrial mono-cultural agriculture has led to contamination of water supply and inability to deal with drought and extreme weather events as well as poor nutritional content in food crops and high levels of toxins in fibres. We need to rewild the landscape and need to think in terms of the health of the soil. A new paradigm could be, 'From soil to food to fibre to atmosphere'.

## We need to take personal challenge and self-care seriously

- Sustainability at all levels is important – the personal can be demanding and there is risk of burnout when there is a real passion. Self-care is foundational. If we are to care for others we need to care for ourselves. Combining a sense of urgency with self-care is a challenge.
- There is a sense of urgency with climate action calls and the challenge to be a 'troublemaker'. This can lead to chronic stress in life and body. We can feel burdened by our expectations of ourselves and the enormity of the task of trying to make the world a better place. We need to be kind to ourselves and acknowledge our own contribution is worthwhile.
- It starts with an authentic place with self in really caring; at home, personal to professional (a social, ecological lens on caring):
  - Claiming your space
  - Repairing with care
  - Unlearning internalised oppressions/ being able to care for self
  - Love for self → compassion arises → care as an active part of compassion



- Deep personal change can take a lifetime – perhaps we need to just accept changes in behaviour. Deeper cultural change can start with education.
- I am always aware of whether my own lifestyle is doing more harm than good. If I can get to the end of my life and think that I have done more good than harm. Our lifestyles are still so harmful. I don't want to lose sight of that reality while also not beating myself up about it as this is the society we have been born into and it is how we have to function and interact... I try and do no harm.
- At the grassroots level, people are contributing in little ways: recycling, dietary changes, composting, using energy-efficient appliances and electric heating/ cooling, ethical purchasing etc. Everyone in my family cares and takes action in a slightly different way, for example young people who take up a vegan diet or elect not to have children. This is all about relieving pressure on the planet.
- I appreciate those who take the warrior role but it's a step too far for me at this stage. I do what I can do. If I hadn't joined the WCC I'd feel like I'd let down future generations. You can win the war and lose the peace. We need to build the peace.
- We need spaces where people can experience the feelings generated by existential threat and hopefully move forward to active hope. Even for 'catastrophists', the notion of 'active hope' can motivate us to reach out and keep going.
- We don't have to carry everything. We can help sustain each through the connections, conviviality and high seriousness of our purpose.
- [Wayapa Wuurrk](#), an Indigenous healing modality, encompasses bodily movement to tell a story using the 14 elements of the Earth. It's not intellectual. With the idea of an ethic of care, we can study it, we can read about it, we can intellectualise it, but until we have an experience of it in our bodies, we don't shift anything. It stays cerebral, but bringing it into a spiritual practice is a way of awakening consciousness and connecting to the land, realising there is no hierarchy, I'm not above nature, I'm not controlling it, I am it.

## COLLABORATING FOR CHANGE

### Promoting collaboration as a value *and* as action for survival

- Our past, easy life won't continue in coming decades. How can we prepare for the challenges that are coming? One of the things I think about a sense of community and connection. The ability to collaborate will be very important whether things get bad or not.
- If we think of 'partnership' as the new leadership, collaboration and participation become key in the new world we want to see and for our survival. Individualism is not the way forward.
- The idea that climate change is a divisive thing is really crazy. We're all in this together. Collaboration is going to be needed regardless of the outcome of climate change – to mitigate its affects or to work with what remains.
- Collaboration in science has led to the development of COVID vaccines in record fast time. Everybody pivoted to one cause. It would be good to see that happen for [the] climate crisis.
- You can collaborate with people without actually changing your views or the other person's views, or you can just collaborate in a technical sense, or you can collaborate around a common goal and values. Collaboration can be tightly coupled or loose where you've just influenced each other's thinking and you still do your own thing, but it's not exactly what you would have done on your own.
- Collaboration can involve looking at the patterns in our society and networking. Learning from other people is part of the sense-making, network-weaving, creating connections to accelerate change.
- We need to work inside and outside the system. For example, working inside might involve WCC reaching out to polities from all parties and conservative women's groups. Those inside the system have power but no time; those outside have time but less power. Perhaps there is room for collaboration here. Reaching out across difference can yield unexpected positive results.

- Collaboration requires working on our personal attributes – we need psychological flexibility. Even with consensus processes it is hard to achieve shared understanding. We need more conversations where people are listened to across difference. If there's a group that is voting for politicians that are not going to do anything about climate, let's engage with them rather than push them away.

## Examples of collaborative action

- [The] central idea of the WCC is to have a facilitated or mediated process that would bring people together to develop a national action plan on climate change.
- We formed a coalition of 150 different small groups in the South-West of Western Australia to strengthen our voices in a petition to [the] federal government to strengthen its response to the COP 26.
- Reaching out to Scott Morrison, our interfaith group – Buddhist, Baha'i, Christian etc. – tried to build collaboration by appealing to his faith and ethics and encouraging a recognition that our world is so awesome, in the real sense of the word, and the ecosystems so interrelated that we cannot afford to lose any more species etc. Stressing that we are not set apart from nature but interrelated and dependent. Also what sort of world does he want to leave his children and grandchildren and pointing out his special responsibility as prime minister to care for the planet/ creation.
- Sydney Commons Lab. The Commons, which is about the stewardship of resources by the communities, not by the private sector, not by government, but with communities very much at the centre. And commoning is key to that, which is communities working together in a democratic way.
- The [Principle of Charity podcast](#) is a simple reframe from debate to dialogue. They chose two people with different perspectives on a topic. Rather than frame it as a debate they asked each person to find the best in the other's perspective. It was lovely to hear people having a really good go, but not trying to win – to find the common ground. When you look for it, you find it. You do find it if you frame things that way, but not if you frame it as winners and losers, or black and white. Then you lose that nuance, that complexity. We don't like that messiness, we like that simplicity, but truth-seeking takes skill and patience.
- Deep democracy. See [ProACT video](#).
- 'Neighbourly conversations' is a process WCC is organising for politicians of different political perspectives in neighbouring electorates to come together for an informal chat with members of their electorate to identify values and common ground, to demonstrate a different way of interacting beyond the adversarial. Those steps are tiny, only one conversation at a time, but it's a big idea.
- I ran a small community organisation for 20 years in Western Sydney and took a collaborative network approach to tackling issues [This was] seen as very innovative then. I found that small and local was really important and undervalued. I co-founded a group like 'Voices for' for small NGOs and we raised the profile of small organisations holding really big issues. We... [used] a systems frame to tackle specific issues like drug and alcohol abuse within a whole systems approach and managed to raise the importance of this with the community and human services sectors. I experienced how partnering and working with each other, you can actually influence the way people think, and influence can ripple out.
- There was a successful mediation process in South Australia around Native Title, and also around water and water rights which led to accepted local solutions across very divided views. The WCC would love to apply this approach to climate action.
- I was involved in developing Aboriginal education policy by sitting together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Central Australia back in 1988. The national policy adopted in 1989 by the Hawke Government was based around the 'communique' produced there after further consultation with educators and Indigenous leaders.
- Early in [the] 2000s, a collaboration of 60 women's organisations formed a civil society coalition on peace and security to pressure the government to produce a national action plan in response to a UN resolution on that topic. It reported on it annually for six years and conducted policy dialogue with government. So a collaboration between women's organisations who all had an interest in not just peace and security, but in development. It was collaboration around a common interest.

- We joined with other community groups in signing the [Community Sector Climate Declaration](#) to show decision-makers that a fast, fair and inclusive plan to address climate change this decade matters to the community sector and the communities we work in. The Declaration was delivered to federal decision-makers during Community Sector Climate Advocacy Week 4-8 October 2021.
- Settlement Services International (SSI) became the first signatory of the Community Sector Climate Declaration and was one of the first Australian organisations to sign the [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations](#), which sets out seven commitments to steer collective humanitarian action in response to climate and environmental crises that threaten our future.

## Building the capacity to listen

- Uniting for action requires taking a breath first and then responding from a place of care, kindness, and recognition of the trauma that we live with.
- We need to look at the context of issues, have those deeper conversations. Women seem to have that capacity, whether it's biological or environmental or social. Women are more likely to share vulnerability, and not put money ahead of people.
- We need to create and demand opportunities for processes where people really listen to each other and take time to engage. It's difficult for people in power to give it up. I'm hoping that there's a turning [point] and many men who are not ego-driven and greed-driven say [that] what they've been doing is destructive and doesn't work – and [that] they will open up to non-hierarchical processes where people respect others.
- I see a lot of value in these conversations [like WTT]. In the past I have questioned the impact of small conversations. I've also been in some with the ProACT team and I am seeing evidence that these circles somehow seem to feed into women rising, building connection with each other and validating our beliefs. Small steps, but very powerful. There is a need for space to reflect on our values and what matters, being grounded in our values and acting/ spending time on what matters.
- Isn't it like word of mouth? Word of mouth is [the] best advertising. Circles or kitchen table conversations. We will leave this conversation tonight and have a conversation with someone else about the conversation we've just had and that will lead to something else. Reinforcing the value of a conversation. A deliberate conversation with [the] intention to bring about change.
- One of the things that comes up is the skills and capacity to have these sorts of conversations and to know what it means to really listen to each other and to have those good dialogue practices. We need to develop this capacity across society.
- WCC has been so enjoyable and easy because of that skill in conversation. I wonder if conversation is our means ... we know we are good at it. We need to create the arena in which our conversation is heard. We're not listened to but one shared arena is the care for future generations.
- What is lacking is the critical ability of those who can make decisions to hear. It is not just up to us to make the change in how we speak, there is something about the system [that] is not geared to hearing. Our systems are structured to be polarised... Our media [and] parliament are not structured like these circles for deliberative, appreciative dialogue. We don't see that in our public discourse.
- Look at international examples that are working. Social media enables people to share with each other experiences of what's going on at a more ordinary level, rather than going more traditional.
- Discussion about climate change can be divisive at many levels, not just around politics. Many biases prevent us from coming together. Racism, religious biases, sexuality biases – all just people who might be a little bit different to ourselves. Working on finding connection – making personal relationships with people who may seem different or have a different point of view – is important.

## Learning from difference

- I don't agree with the degree to which cancelling and censoring are taking place. We should be able to talk about issues as opposed to just being shut down because we're not sure or questioning issues.



Whether we are talking about COVID, racism or gender issues I think we need to find ways beyond shutting people down or micro-managing individuals' behaviour. We need to be a questioning society, at the same time as building warmth and depth.

- We all live in 'echo chambers' so ongoing dialogue and communication is essential.
- I did not like the way the left characterised the Queenslanders who voted for Clive Palmer. I think we've got to move beyond the divisions. There are reasons why people do what they do. We need to break down the divisions and the judgments. When Hillary Clinton called Trump voters 'deplorables', she lost any possibility of people coming over to her because she just insulted people.
- It's about shifting the culture to one that is more caring and more cooperating and can deal with complexity, as opposed to simplistic responses; a culture that puts Indigenous wisdom really at the centre for economic justice and ecological regeneration.
- We should include many different types of women from different cultures, parents or not, different professions etc., to see how they are affected and [to] gain their views on how to fix the problem.
- Networking can affect systems change, [as can] reaching out across difference. For example, many farmers are climate allies. Social dialogue is important, especially in trying to think things through in a different way. In XR we advocate for people's and citizens' assemblies. It's difficult to get buy-in and these processes are only useful if they are conducted to allow people to feel as though they can really talk and have a voice.
- We need to build connections between those trying to forge a new path and support them as well as knock on the doors of MPs and CEOs to bring about change.

## CHANGES WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE

### Putting an ethic of care at the centre

- What we do to the Earth we do to ourselves; our model is of exploitation rather than nurture. What shifts can we make in our environment to value care? How do you challenge with care? How do we show care to people with different values? How do we recognise their underlying fears and hopes?
- If you have care at the centre, it does challenge the ethic of competition. It gives you an entirely different basis for thinking about the climate space, how you want to run your organisations, how you want to bring about change, what you perceive as being useful changes.
- Exploring women rising means exploring systemic change: climate action, feminism, care for each other and environment all go together. We need to value caring, but our current systems don't.
- As well as having more women in political leadership, we need decision-making that is more aligned to an ethic of care, to the environment, to climate, to biodiversity, to human and non-human life.
- It's not just about women and it's not entirely all on women. While women are more likely to align with an ethic of care than men, that isn't to say that men aren't. It also doesn't mean that all women are aligned to it. Having that ethic of care is a different way of thinking.
- Women rising looks like pushing the boundaries to change the system and create new perspectives within formal systems, for example within government departments responsible for planning.
- One condition needed to shift the systems and encourage collaboration involves the need to value care and foster social, ecological systems of care, from self to community and environment. How do we come back to caring in the face of chronic stress and a sense of urgency?
- Putting an ethic of care as the basis of your decisions positions everything in a slightly different way. So for example, leadership training around an ethic of care would look quite different to the kinds of leadership training that you do to work in a hierarchical, competitive system. So also with decision-making. If we do take this ethic of care seriously, it means a total transformation of society.
- Economists and feminist economists are modelling what an ethic of care would look like, for example having universal basic income. It also goes nicely with, but without co-opting, Indigenous ideas of stewardship and guardianship. I'm wary of co-opting Indigenous ideas, but we can work with Aboriginal

people as allies to find ways that we can move forward together – caring for all cultures, not just the white, colonial kind of culture. This will not be easy, but we need to start somewhere.

- At the personal level bring the connections (with people) to come back to care. Approach someone how you would want to be treated yourself.

## Responding to climate change in all its complexity

- Climate change is complex – we can't just change one thing and think everything will be okay, so we feel overwhelmed and don't know how to respond. There is a political tendency to apply simple solutions to complex problems.
- I think that women have the characteristics of being able to really understand the complexities of what we're dealing with, and [to] take a more relational approach that still says, we do need outcomes, but it's not a single outcome, it's multiple outcomes that interrelate.
- If more people understand that climate change is complex that's a start. The environment is a web of interconnections. Nature supports life on the planet and we are part of nature. We can't continue to exploit nature without consequences. If we don't act to protect nature we can expect the consequences: poor physical and mental health outcomes, increased costs of combating climate change, loss of biodiversity, war over resources, and ultimately human demise.
- The fallout of the geopolitical situation caused by climate change means that there will be climate refugees, desertification of parts of the planet, and rising water levels in other parts. In the South Pacific, the future of a number of countries with rising sea levels is in serious doubt. The complexity of climate change means it affects our national security as well as our natural environment.
- I worry that if we don't focus on what's causing climate change – the carbon and the emissions – [and instead]... start talking about complexity, the whole ecology – [then] you've got to deal with everything. Often people start talking about conservation and environment rather than climate change. Obviously, we do have to worry about the whole ecological situation but if you lose sight of what the overriding problem is and don't really do anything because this is complex, then we are in trouble.
- Climate change is important. It affects every aspect of our lives. No community will be immune.
- We have known for a long time about the threats we face – [see] Club of Rome reports in the 1970s (for example 'The Limits to Growth' and 'Mankind at the Turning Point'), the 1992 Rio Summit, the 2006 film 'An Inconvenient Truth', the Canberra bushfires of 2003, and then the 2019-20 fires. Knowing people affected by the fires is very different to having an intellectual awareness. Tony Abbott's denial of climate change in 2017 after Australia had confirmed its belief as host of the G20 in 2014 set things back.
- We need leadership and a plan to get us to net zero by 2030. Strong leaders can not only take us on the change journey, they can make us proud of the big decisions and the action we take.
- How about we require politicians to make statements about where they stand on climate change? Politicians are not seeing or are choosing to ignore the longer-term issue for short-term political objectives, for example profits from coal companies. We would like to see more science literacy in parliament.
- The government must have a specific plan on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, for example through a carbon tax or by using 100% renewable energy. More research [is] needed on climate change and how as a society we must adapt. Compare R&D on climate change and R&D on health and security.
- Up until recently, we had delegated responsibility for addressing climate change to governments, but it's clear that governments are not up to the challenge. Business is now committing to action and getting on board because of the importance of raising capital and investor confidence.
- What is required at the governmental policy level is well known. There is a feeling of helplessness in [the] face of inertia at the federal level. State governments and big business are taking the lead.
- [The] federal government has its head in the sand. The current 2050 commitment is not enough and a lack of leadership is compounded by a seeming lack of skills to manage the changes that are required.
- There are good insights from the climate science fiction of Kim Stanley Robinson

## Respecting Indigenous wisdom and learning from it

- Collaborating looks like learning from the ongoing work and wisdom of First Nations communities. I hope we can form that connection strongly here with Indigenous people. If we can really feel that connection, not just for us now, it would be such an historic goodness. We could gain strength from ancestral realism.
- It doesn't take much exploration to see why we feel attuned with Indigenous approaches, for example women's business. They had the fundamental wisdom of separating men's and women's business and looking at people's business together. It meant everyone had an equal voice but each had their own realm of wisdom and mutual respect.
- I want to work with a group including Indigenous women to develop a genuine self-governance system.
- From links with Indigenous women the idea of gender collaboration, rather than gender equity, has emerged – an honouring of men's business and of women's business. There's a partnership between the two that is equal. This idea is not pervasive in our culture. Gender equity is often for women to become equal to men, in a male designed system. We need a redesigned system for proper gender collaboration.
- Senator Mehreen Faruqi says there's no climate justice without First Nations justice.
- [Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann's works](#) should be amplified.
- We need Dadirri, deep listening and reciprocity.
- There is a need to understand the work of First Nations communities that is beyond a capitalist model of promoting not-for-profits and/ or appropriating First Nations work.
- Listening to Indigenous people, I see our obligation to the natural world and that all life depends on the health of the planet. We need to be guardians and custodians of it if we are to survive.
- The idea that the land is a living thing – as in Indigenous knowledge – used to exist in stories connecting us to the spirit of the land, for example fairies at the bottom of the garden. [In another] example, there was a grove in an Indian village that was sacred because there were spirits there, so it was left alone. Then western people came and labelled this as superstition, so people cut down the trees to use the wood. Then the spring dried up and the village was destroyed because they didn't have any water to grow crops. It's difficult for us to acknowledge that we are not the overlords of Earth and that these myths and stories have value.
- In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have knowledge about country and the interconnectedness of life leading to deep wisdom about nurturing country and people. More integration of Indigenous knowledge and biology is needed to rebuild many of our habitats and ecosystems. There is great scope to learn from Indigenous cultures about caring for country.
- What does authentic listening and learning from First Nations communities look like? For me it comes back to time spent on what we value. With COVID I've seen friends and colleagues valuing time gained from travel to spend with themselves or loved ones. I think it's boosted our ability to explore values because our economic work system always saw us working the typical 9-5 but I'm fascinated to know whether a change in our working hours will change that and provide space to explore time?
- Since collaborating with Aboriginal-owned businesses, I have learned so much, and made so many mistakes. It's been a huge journey on how to be an ally, how to unpack all my white privilege, so programmed into me. My Indigenous teacher said, 'You can only take people as far as you've taken yourself'. And she's right. We need to remind ourselves that there's so much work to do inside of us to unpack this privilege and to dissolve the ego, which is a humbling experience, this unlearning of my own egoic needs and desires to really open myself up to other knowledge.

## Generating new approaches to governance and political culture

- Political leadership seems to be deteriorating. There is a palpable sense of frustration that nothing has changed and there is no sense of urgency from government.
- Political donations are a huge issue – Australia reputedly has the worst laws in all democratic countries. Ideally, we need to get to a stage where no corporate donations are allowed to any candidate and

instead, the candidate gets a fixed allocation to run their campaign. Large, powerful lobby groups with deep pockets are impeding change, especially the fossil fuel industry and large agricultural corporations.

- If you want real change it's not enough to advocate within the current parliamentary system. There are many things wrong with it and this is relevant to our conversation. There's no transparency, accountability or leadership, really. The way democracy is structured protects men's interests or the patriarchy. As long as we have that system, it doesn't matter who is prime minister, they might do things slightly nicer, but basically, they're captured by the same system.
- The new world should be much more participatory. Achieving this is essential but very challenging. To make the shift to deliberative democracy is not enough on its own. We need a range of cultural and system changes, for example technology used to support human society not control or destroy it.
- There are 'Voices for' movements looking to put independents [in power] and we need more women in politics. Thank God for Helen Haines and Cathy McGowan. The next election is really important.
- I think a two-party system doesn't work. When Julia Gillard was prime minister there were three independents she had to negotiate with, [and] she got through because she was a good negotiator, but it was better policy because she had to consider several different agendas. Other countries work with a minority government across multiple parties and I think that is a good thing. We need a number of independents, or smaller parties, rather than just getting people into the two-party system. It's not just about getting more women into parliament, it's about changing the way parliament works and how people act in parliament. Multi-party is not very efficient? I think we need to get rid of this word, 'efficiency', or challenge it. Efficiency is not always effectiveness.
- Deliberative democracy, with randomised, stratified groups of citizens given the information they need, can make wise decisions on behalf of the community. People come with a range of views but good information and skilled facilitation lead to trust and good outcomes.
- '[Big Deal: Is our Democracy for Sale](#)' showed the Indi process. When their elected representative goes to Canberra, they take volunteers to work in their office to learn how the system works.
- Indi is leading in a really positive way. They got an independent up in a safe Liberal electorate, followed by another independent – both women. They are inclusive through the people coming with them to parliament, and the volunteers go home and share the conversations.
- I'd like to see good ideas revisited (for example, on climate action) even if there was a 'no' in the past.
- While personal change is good, we really need to change things at a higher policy and economic level.

## Embracing new economic thinking

- We must remain vigilant against attempts to see the climate debate as a subset of the economy. It should be the other way round. If there is no sustainable climate, there will be no environment for an economy or society to exist, let alone progress.
- We need a circular economy – move away from growth; UBI is promising – [this] may give people time to focus on the issues that matter. How do we resist the urgency of capitalist models and the insistence that only the things that are measurable, matter?
- Regenerative agriculture: if pursued nationwide, it would be a way of preserving jobs in agriculture as well as great for the environment.
- There is a false dichotomy between jobs and emissions, but we do need to take care of people's livelihoods. We need a proper plan for regional areas and [for] replacing mining related jobs even in the cities. There has to be space to understand the loss that they are going to feel in the future. We need to transition jobs so no one loses out – it's not easy for people to give up their livelihoods.
- Even the green economy is based on competition and is carbon-neutral, rather than carbon-free.
- There is an opportunity cost of not acting and we need to be aware of this. However, the economic and mitigating social disruptions caused by going green must be planned.
- Kate Raworth says in 'Doughnut Economics' that humanity's 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. Climate change is one aspect of this.
- We need research and development for new manufacturing techniques not dependent on fossil fuel.

- Globally a growing gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ is an economic challenge.
- [The] media needs to be more nuanced in its reporting about climate change so as to provide more context about structural adjustment of the economy and the opportunities that may arise.

## Women taking a stand against consumerism

- We have to address the root of the problem, not just the symptoms. Society is geared towards unnecessary consumption. We need to normalise sustainable living – achieving the same functionality with either different components or materials that are better for the environment, for example batteries. The media and clever marketing aim to convince us that we never have enough – more or better is always necessary. This is especially [true] about marketing directed towards young women.
- Greed and consumerism are no longer tenable. We need to get away from the notion that growth requires endless consumerism. Our western growth model is geared towards unnecessary and endless consumption. Population policy and natural resource exploitation need to take account of Earth’s finite resources whilst allowing continuing development in poorer nations.
- We always want to get to the top of things and to have more. It’s no longer enough to stand at the bottom of a mountain and stare up and say, ‘That is a sacred place and how blessed I am to live in the presence of this’. [Instead] we have to conquer it, own it.
- Women and girls are targeted with fast fashion and have been conditioned to unnecessary consumption because of pressure to be ‘attractive, successful and accepted’. We need to change this perception to change behaviour and to validate minimalist consumption and lifestyle choices.
- Women are targeted as consumers, with fast fashion one example. We need to resist this and call it out. This is a big issue around waste in disposing of unwanted items and in terms of unproductive use of resources in making them in the first place. As a society, we need to be more conscious of what we’re consuming and we need to support businesses taking action.
- Consumption of food and textiles is often guided by women so we have enormous power through our consumption choices. We need to encourage girls to say ‘no’ to materialism and endless consumption, and educate young people on how advertisers shape their preferences and wants. This is difficult as advertising speaks to emotions rather than logic, which is why it is so effective.
- We need to encourage ethical purchasing and how to be more sustainable. There is scope for more educational material on TV and on social media that is also entertaining, for example Mr Beast’s YouTube channel, which has lots of information directed towards the young in an entertaining way.
- I’d like to see more public information on what is having [the] best impact on combatting climate change and supporting sustainable living. We need to motivate people around the sustainability of life and the pressures we are placing on natural environments, to slow down, connect back to nature.
- We are part of nature and have a responsibility to future generations to preserve the natural environment. We can relearn sustainability from Indigenous people and unlearn endless materialism.
- There is now so much plastic in the world and so much stuff. We need to stop generating more, for example by giving donations as Christmas presents not buying more things, shopping at op shops etc.
- Education is needed about the composition of what we eat and wear and the impact of that on our overall health and immune systems, for example [we need education on the] chemicals used to produce fruit for transportation and longevity rather than taste. [Bio-monitoring by the Canadian government](#) regularly reports on chemical exposure, including food, [in a system] based on human bio-monitoring.
- We need more attention on food. Our mono-cultural system of farming is destroying biodiversity, contaminating waterways through chemical run-off and is not good for our physical or mental health. Our food and water security are under threat. Food waste is a huge [greenhouse gas] emitter.
- One of the gifts of COVID has been less business travel and greater use of Zoom. It would be good to see greater adoption of electric vehicles.
- We can start by where we live, for example by developing environmentally-friendly activities in our own locality. This is good in itself but also models behaviour to others. It is okay to start small. We need to build a groundswell so these changes become inevitable.

# Background on the Women's Climate Congress

## A network of women from all walks of life and all political persuasions

The Women's Climate Congress is a network of women from all walks of life and political views united around a common [vision and values](#). We have come together now because we cannot stay silent while the unfolding climate emergency threatens the future of our children and all life on Earth. We will work with open minds and hearts to inspire mediation and collaboration across political parties to stabilise the climate and protect the Earth and the land we love for ourselves and future generations.

We are inspired by the International Congress of Women who, in 1915, worked together to end the war through mediation and establish the conditions for permanent peace. Our mission to achieve climate balance via mediation is inspired by the example of their moral courage and innovative leadership.

### We accept the science

We accept the scientific consensus expressed in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports and incorporated into the Paris Accord. As beneficiaries of the industrial age, we suspend judgment on the leadership decisions that have brought us here. Our mission is future-focused: we want to be a catalyst for united and creative change to restore climate balance and a renewed commitment to care for life on Earth.

### Time for women to lead

We believe that it is time for women to lead the cultural change needed because their broader perspective can overcome political roadblocks to action and help rebalance our currently stuck system towards compassion, inclusion and collaboration. Our organisational structure is based on circles and is non-hierarchical and collaborative. As far as possible we design processes that suit women's schedules and ways of working together. Our activities to bring women to the fore include an online climate conversation series with women leaders from many different spheres, specific outreach to learn from Indigenous women, and encouraging female politicians from all sides of politics to form a women's caucus to support each other and consider issues of concern for women and the world.

### A cultural shift towards collaboration for the benefit of all

We aim to develop and model principles for the cultural shifts needed to prioritise nurture of life and custodianship of the Earth in all policy decisions. We will progressively promote these principles across all genders and parties to build trust that collaborative processes can reconcile differences and promote the common good. This approach is described in these two papers:

- ['Independent mediation for uniting action on climate change'](#) – the paper that started it all by Congress founder Janet Salisbury.
  - Written over 2019-20, this paper is intended to be just a discussion starter for thinking about how to break the current political deadlock preventing action on climate change.
- ['Building a unified national agreement for Australia's climate response - Proposal for an inclusive process to address climate risks'](#)
  - This proposal has been submitted to government.

These ideas are a beginning and we welcome all approaches that promote united, collaborative and evidence-based action to address climate change. For more information visit [Women's Climate Congress](#).