

## OP-ED on CLIMATE CHANGE

No one goes outside anymore. No one wants to. The skies are full of poisonous clouds which burn people's skin. The sea is scorching, so nobody goes to swim anymore. We hear on the news that far off lands have famine, that people have been dropping dead like flies from the intense heat waves, that entire cities have been levelled by the rising sea levels and raging storms. Every natural phenomenon is gone. All of it. The reefs died years ago, forests have been levelled and most animals are just myths we tell our children, - stories of what once was. We tell other myths too, other lies. We lie when we say that we could never have prevented this outcome. It was inevitable. It was unavoidable. It was unpredicted.

Do you know how long we have until this becomes reality? Eleven years. We have eleven years until the climate crisis becomes irreversible. In eleven years' time, I will still be alive. My mum and my dad and my brother and my sister will all be alive. Hopefully you, who read this, will be alive. We will all be alive to witness the climate crisis. But do you know who will have to clean it up, who will have to live all their life in this world? Me, and my friends, and my peers, and the children who I see on the bus, and the babies, who can't talk, can't read, can't walk but will have to grow up in a world which was damaged by people long before them. We are the generation that will be here to inherit this Earth that you have created for us, your children.

The fact, the only fact that matters, is that fossil fuels, in particular carbon dioxide, are warming our planet and throwing the natural systems out of balance. Everyone should be trying their hardest to prevent this. Implement the solutions, because we already have the answer: Australia needs to reduce CO2 emissions by 26-28% by 2030 in order to help stop the climate crisis.

We are not achieving this. The Australian government has allowed Adani to begin work on the Carmichael coal mine in Central Queensland. The pollution from the Adani mine is eight times the national limit but the government approved it. The pollution from burning of coal is the single biggest contributor to global warming, which will lead to extreme weather and further bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef. Just as we need to be cutting pollution, the government approves this pollution-making machine. The government needs to be doing more to stop large coal mines, like the Adani mine, from being opened in the first place. But if they will not listen to the science and we, as children, must make them listen through peaceful protest.

The 20-27<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 was the biggest climate strike in world history. The protesters named these seven days 'The Global Week for Future' in which they demanded that action be taken to address climate change. Their demands are simple: keep fossil fuels in the ground, achieve 100% clean energy by 2030 and help climate change affected refugees be relocated.

Many people do not understand the sheer volume of coal we have expelled into our atmosphere. Well-respected natural historian Sir David Attenborough has said that, "Before we started to burn coal the amount of CO2 in our atmosphere was about 280 parts/million.

It is now well over 400 parts/million and the planet keeps getting hotter and hotter," during his recent documentary *Climate Change: The Facts*. This statistic should be enough to stop the opening of major coal mines, but it is not. These things have to change.

One year ago, Prime Minister Scott Morrison addressed the recent school climate strikes saying that, 'Schools should have more learning, less activism.' Though in school we can learn, I agree, we can also learn through experiences. In schools, teachers tell us to be an active participant in democracy, to protest, to use our voice and that's what people have done. Students like me cannot vote, so we must find other ways to express our opinions in major decisions that affect us. These other ways include striking for what we believe in - the survival of the Earth and all its beauty.

We are said to be the laziest generation in centuries. Doesn't this show the opposite? People like me have started to wake up and realise that the world is changing, and not for the better. We are frustrated that the government aren't doing anything, so we will. Climate change activist Greta Thunberg said in her speech at the G20 Summit that, "I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act like you would in a crisis. I want you to act like your house is on fire, because it is." This is a crisis and the only way us children can act on this dire situation is for us to unite and strike. If you care about the cause, you will be at the next climate strike, alongside me.

Helena Harris