

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle

President's Annual Report 2015-16



Paris

The year has seen record high global average temperatures month after month, and a succession of extreme weather events. The much anticipated Paris climate conference in December succeeded in producing an agreement to act to limit global warming to 2C above pre-industrial levels, and to aim for 1.5C. Analysts have welcomed this but have noted that the targets proposed by each nation are insufficient to achieve this, and - at least in Australia's case - our policies and actions to date are insufficient even to reach this insufficient target. Our work is not yet done!

Political environment

The sudden change of Prime Minister from Tony Abbott to Malcolm Turnbull has softened the government's aggressive anti-climate action stance slightly, but not as much as we might have hoped. The coalition government was returned in the July election, and the appearance of an outspoken climate change denier in the Senate has given fresh oxygen to the denier movement.

Federally, the Balmain-Rozelle area is now in Grayndler, not Sydney, so instead of Tanya Plibersek, our federal MP is now Anthony Albanese.

Leichhardt Council has been forcibly merged with Marrickville and Ashfield to form the Inner West Council. There are no elected councillors for the next year. Our well-developed relationship with Leichhardt Council, particularly through our presence on its Environment and Climate Change Committee, will need to be re-established with the new council when it gets around to community representation.

Peoples' Climate March

Our major activity in the second half of 2015 was the People's Climate March on 29th November. Under Angela's leadership CCBR was very active in promoting the march locally, workshopping yellow scarves and posters, handing out flyers at various places and gaining endorsement by Leichhardt Council. On the day, about 45,000 people rallied in The Domain and Macquarie Street. It was the biggest number so far for a climate march – but we need bigger numbers still if we are to really make an impact. As the local community group closest to the city centre we have a particular opportunity to take some leadership in nationally co-ordinated events like these and it's very pleasing to find that about 2,750 people from the postcodes that we cover were at the march – three times the proportion from Sydney as a whole.

Strategy meeting

Our strategy survey and planning meeting early in 2016 focussed us on

- activities for the federal election:
 - ✓ We prepared a social media campaign with a number of illustrated memes or messages to be sent to the hashtag #IvoteClimate via Twitter or Facebook. This had limited success, but it's interesting that the current national Climate Emergency campaign is using a very similar program.
- co-operating with other organisations on far-reaching national campaigns:
 - ✓ In the latter part of this year we have become involved in the "Dirty AGL" campaign run by 350.org.au, and the Climate Emergency campaign.
- increasing the appearance of climate issues and information (especially from CCBR) in the media:
 - ✓ This has been more of a challenge, and we should re-examine ways that our members could help to achieve this.

Meetings and events

Climate in the Pub continues to provide stimulating discussion every two months. Attendances hover around 30, with some regulars plus a few different faces each time. Topics in the year have included

- climate change and health
- how to win friends and influence policy
- community renewable energy
- fossil fuel subsidies
- the politics of climate change

with speakers from relevant organisations including Doctors for the Environment, WWF, 350.org, and the Community Power Agency among many others. CCBR posters up around the area have not only brought new faces to the meetings, but also made CCBR much more visible to the community.

We were unable to organise a joint meeting with the Balmain Institute as we had the previous year.

Other public appearances have included a stall at Leichhardt Council's Footprints Festival, and one at the council's annual "Climate Conversations" event at Leichhardt Town Hall, where we spotlighted the carbon footprint of everyday items that are commonly thrown away.

Lobbying and campaigning

We have written several letters and submissions, including

- to the PM asking for strong proposals at the Paris climate conference
- on the M4-East Environmental Impact Statement
- to the EPA on Container Deposit scheme
- to the ALP regarding its policies on climate change and renewable energy

And a CCBR delegation visited Albo in his electorate office following up on our EIS submission, to object to ALP support for WestConnex.

Thanks to Kim, Gavin, Angela and Derek and others for their work on these.

These activities have all continued in the latter part of 2016 and will be reported next year.

Online activities

We have sent out an e-newsletter about once a month, and about the same number of reminders or "stop press" announcements. Our email list has fallen slightly from 781 to 750, with a few new sign-ups at each public event, and a few unsubscribes after each newsletter is sent out. Only 25% to 30% of people actually open each email but this is actually a high rate for the community sector.

The website remains a mine of information. Derek continues to update news and other links, and we attempt to keep the other pages informative, relevant and readable. However, the site only receives a small handful of visitors each week. We have recently upgraded the monitoring system to help analyse where visitors come from and which pages they visit most often.

We have 286 Facebook friends and 92 followers on Twitter.

Finances

During the year we changed to a floating membership renewal cycle so that membership was valid for 12 months from when it was paid (rather than for the financial year) which has actually simplified the renewal process, and might eventually lead to a more regular (albeit slight) revenue from subscriptions.

Donations at Climate in the Pub almost exactly cover catering expenses.

Early in the year two "Fridge First/Love Food Hate Waste" workshops presented by Kate with Angela's assistance for Leichhardt and Strathfield Councils earned \$1,000 for the group, and a garage/garden sale run by Angela helped cover the costs of our Climate March activities.

Apart from the cash contributions over and above membership fees, several members have covered significant operating costs out of their own pocket, and we note and very much appreciate this.

Committee

During the year the committee welcomed Rob Garnsey as an additional committee member, and his contribution – especially with writing submissions and the election Twitter campaign (the long and the short of it!) – has been invaluable.

I would like to say to each and every one of the committee members: "thanks, we couldn't have managed without you". But in fact, at any given time through the year, we have been without one or more of the committee – away travelling, campaigning, studying or for other personal reasons. And we have still managed, though invariably relieved when that person has returned). So, not forgetting the regular and reliable participation of all those not on the committee, I will thank the committee as a whole – for contributing so much, for keeping things going through the year, and just being a darned fine team.

Dominic Case

President, 2015-16