

Climate Conversations Toolkit | 2021



We need a plan to renew Australia that puts people, nature and our climate at the centre.

Every one of us in the ACF community has a huge opportunity to reach out to people we know and invite them to help to make this vision a reality.

Millions of people in Australia are worried about climate damage but haven't been offered options to express their concern in ways they feel comfortable. They feel uncertain and anxious about climate change, but need to build their confidence to take that concern to decision makers like our politicians.

There is a particular segment of this group that is vital for us to have conversations with and support them to move to action: **people over 50 years old who are concerned about climate change but need some support and encouragement to turn that concern into action.**

Why these people? **Our research tells us that many decision makers like politicians are paying close attention to what this demographic does and says.** If this group of folks raise their voices, our movement will build power and make more politicians sit up and act!

We all know people who need support to turn concern into action. They are our **friends, colleagues, neighbours, siblings, parents, grandparents.**

Conversations with someone they know and trust is proven to be a powerful tool in supporting them to move from concern to action.

This toolkit with talk you through:

1. **[How to identify who to have a conversation with.](#)** We have a handy list of characteristics to help you consider who in your life fits a key group of people we've learned that politicians pay particular attention to: people over 50 years old who are concerned about climate change but haven't been offered options to express their concern in ways that they feel comfortable.

2. [How to have a genuine conversation with them about climate damage](#) – with tips on open questions, active listening, centring hope and vision, and drawing on your own feelings and experiences.
3. [How to invite them to join you in taking action](#) by adding their name to [The People's Voice](#), which will show all members of the Australian government the wave of community support to renew Australia with climate and nature solutions.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY WHO TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH

Social research shows us that conversations are an important means of motivating people we trust to take action on climate change and other big issues. People can better process information, explore ideas and commit to action through conversations with people they know and trust.

Who is someone in your life that is concerned about climate change but not sure how to take meaningful action? Who do you know that fits this profile of the demographic that politicians are paying particular attention to (see the handy characteristics list below)?

Identifying *who* you want to speak with is the first step in having a powerful conversation that supports them to take action.

Here are some characteristics to consider (note: the person you speak to may match some but not all of these qualities). The person you choose to speak to might:

- Believe we need to act on climate change now
- Believe that climate change will harm future generations
- Value fairness and equality
- View healthcare and economic security as really important issues
- Be frustrated by political posturing and inaction on climate change and may not be too keen on talking about politics
- Be unsure how to take action on climate change – but can be encouraged to take action through a conversation with someone they know, like you!
- Be over 50 years old

Who in your life fits this profile that politicians are paying particular attention to? It could be **a friend, colleague, neighbour, sibling, parent, grandparent**, or someone else you know.

If you're unsure of where your friends or family stand on climate issues, ask them! Plenty of people who are concerned about climate change don't feel confident to talk about it – so you might not know just how much they really care until you open the discussion with them.

What about conversations with ...

People who are already taking action on climate change? They might be part of a community group, speaking up in their workplace, divesting their money or engaging with political representatives. Ask your active friends to join you in having climate conversations, and invite them to share [The People's Voice](#) with their concerned friends, family, colleagues and others they know. Send them this guide to help them jump on board!

People who don't accept that climate change is happening or that climate action is needed? Speaking with this small minority of people can be disheartening; it can be challenging to motivate them to take action when they don't accept that climate damage is happening. Focus instead on the *many* people who accept that stronger climate action is needed, and simply need some support and motivation to take action.

STEP 2: HAVE YOUR CONVERSATION

Here are our 4 top tips to help you have a meaningful conversation that supports someone to turn their concern into action.

[Tip 1: Start with an open question](#)

[Tip 2: Listen and ask questions](#)

[Tip 3: Centre vision and hope](#)

[Tip 4: Draw on your experiences and feelings](#)

Tip 1: Start with an open question

Getting the conversation started can be the daunting part, but it doesn't have to be. Start with an open question. Bring a sense of curiosity to your conversation with your friend, family member or colleague.

You can try one of these conversation starters:

- Ask them how they feel about climate change
- Ask them how they feel about recent big weather events in your area e.g. storms, bushfires, flooding or heatwaves
- Ask them about how they think climate change is impacting (or might impact) their life and the lives of people around them
- Ask them about solutions to climate change they have heard of that give them hope

Or sometimes another person may offer you the opportunity to start a conversation. They might:

- Ask you what you have been up to lately (take this opportunity to share some actions you have been taking to care for our beautiful planet)
- Comment on a big weather event e.g. storms, bushfires, flooding or heatwaves
- Share concern for their childrens', grandchildrens', or the next generation's future
- Mention something they have read or watched that is related to climate or nature
- Tell you about a place in nature that is important to them (this could include changes in the environment they've observed first hand, that they're concerned about)
- Mention how they have been changing their behaviour out of environment concerns (e.g. recycling, riding to work)
- Express frustration that politicians aren't acting on climate change with the ambition or urgency that the science says is needed

Remember, it may help to share a bit about yourself as you chat – otherwise the other person may feel they are being interviewed, rather than part of a meaningful conversation. You could talk about the people, places and animals you love, why you decided to take climate action, or activities you've seen lately that have inspired you.

Tip 2: Listen and ask questions

Listen actively. Seek to understand the other person's feelings, values and ideas.

Ask curious questions that help you to understand where the other person is coming from and keep the conversation moving. You could ask:

- Why do you think you hold that view?
- What do you think we could do about that?
- Can you tell me more about what you just said?
- Why does that matter to you?

Remember, every conversation you have will be different. Accept the conversation and the person you're talking to. And be yourself. The best conversations involve making a human connection, coming from a place of genuine care for how the person you are speaking to is feeling, and interest in how they've come to form their views.

What to avoid:

Avoid the instinct to interrupt. Try not to dominate the conversation or share *lots* of your opinions, statistics and advice (unless the person specifically asks you for it.) This can be hard, because many of us are very passionate about climate action and have lots of ideas on how to solve the climate crisis! But keep your focus on hearing and understanding the other person. Listening actively will help you to respond thoughtfully, and meet the other person where they are at.

Tip 3: Centre vision and hope

While we still have a lot of work to do to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful. Only explaining the risks associated with the climate crisis can overwhelm people and cause them to switch off.

Think about what gives *you* hope. What is the world that *you* would like to see? And encourage the other person to share their vision for this beautiful country.

Here are some talking points to make sure your conversation centres vision and hope. Use whichever one or ones resonate with you most:

- Australia has huge opportunities to cut climate pollution and create thriving communities with good, future-proof jobs.

- We can be a global clean energy superpower in the *next decade* by replacing coal and gas with renewable energy – and sending our sunshine around the world as renewable energy and manufactured products like hydrogen and green aluminium.
- We can create energy-independent communities – powering schools, sporting clubs, halls and libraries with affordable, clean energy.
- We can improve our health and climate with more accessible public transport and electric cars, running on renewable energy.
- Every fraction of a degree of global warming we prevent will save lives and create a safer and healthier future for us all.

You can also demonstrate how real-life climate solutions are working and how many people are already taking action. Millions of people around the world are focused on solutions – whether it's pressuring their local MP to step up, switching to renewable energy, switching their vote to the party with the strongest climate targets and policies or divesting from companies that fund coal, oil, and gas. Check out [these many wins](#) that are testament to the power of people speaking out for climate action all across Australia and around the world.

Tip 4: Draw on your experiences and feelings

A compelling story can be far more powerful than facts and figures. The solutions to the climate crisis already exist, we just need enough of us to stand up and demand our governments to take action on climate change.

You don't need to be a climate scientist or expert to have a conversation about climate change. This is one of the most vital tips, as those of us who care about climate action can put unnecessary pressure on ourselves to know lots, and that can stop us from having crucial conversations.

And remember, if the other person asks you a question you don't know the answer to, it's okay to say that. You can offer to look up the answer for them so you can continue the conversation – or, even better, look up the answer together!

STEP 3: INVITE THE OTHER PERSON TO TURN CONCERN INTO ACTION

As part of your conversation with your friend, family member or colleague, encourage them to turn their concern into action.

They may feel ready for action after only a few minutes chatting with you. Or it may take a few conversations over time to help them see how they can use their voices and votes to create a future that's good for everyone and every living thing.

Invite the other person to:

- **Add their name** to [The People's Voice](#) – this is a message to all Members and Senators in the Australian Parliament, encouraging them to get on with the climate solutions that are here, now, and ready to roll out in Australia. [The People's Voice](#) will capture powerful stories from people from all walks of life about why they want the Australian Government to act, and will show just how many of us care about renewing this beautiful country with solutions for a safe climate and healthy future.
- **Join a thriving community** of over [40 ACF Community groups](#) coming together to speak out for nature and a safe climate. Together we're growing a powerful movement, running local strategies under our big national campaigns and ensuring elected representatives work for us and our planet.
- **Email their Member of Parliament.** They can [ask their MP](#) to renew Australia with climate solutions, like clean energy for our schools, and restoring our forests, wetlands and mangroves. There are handy talking points about climate and nature solutions to help them decide what to write in their message to their MP.

Thank your friend, family member or colleague for taking the time to speak up. And thank yourself for supporting them to use their voice.

Resources

For reflections and stories on hope and action, to inspire your conversations:

- ACF: [A little climate pick me up](#)
- ACF: [ACF Community stories](#)
- ACF: [Renew Australia policy agenda](#)
- Australia ReMADE: [The Vision](#)
- Australia ReMADE: [Bread and Roses](#)

For more information on the power of conversations in motivating people to act on climate:

- *Climate for Change*: [Social Research](#)
- ACF: [Great Conversations: engaging people in climate action](#)

For information on communicating with different audiences:

- ABC News: [Climate change splits the public into six groups. Understanding them is key to future action](#)
- *The Guardian*: [Stop making sense: why it's time to get emotional about climate change](#)
- *The Guardian*: [Want to talk climate with your family at Thanksgiving? Read these tips](#)
- [The Climate Compass](#)
- *The Australia Institute*: [Climate of the Nation 2020](#)

For information on the importance of listening:

- *Alliance for Climate Education*: [The secret to talking about climate change](#)

For information about climate change, to weave a handy fact or two into your conversation:

- ACF: [Handy facts about climate action](#)
- *The Nature Conservancy*: [Climate change FAQs](#)