POLLUTION, POLITICS AND POWER:
GETTING ON THE PATH TO WINNING
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Towards a climate movement strategy
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we must do what is required.”

– Winston Churchill.

Our species faces a fateful decision. To protect people and build a safe, clean and liveable society by courageous and sustained action to confront the polluting fossil fuel industry and the political interests which collude with it. Or face a hotter world inconsistent with the maintenance of human civilisation and the natural world, as we know it. The choice is stark, and time is short. We understand the problem, but are searching for the best path forward.

This paper is the product of a review among climate movement players. It provides analysis for further strategic discussion, proposes a framework for action and seven strategic interventions:

1. **Contextual analysis** is an overview of the movement's state of play, the problem, federal politics, and community attitudes in order to set the scene for the proposed framework and interventions. It recognises that global warming brings with it disruption, and embracing this disruption will help overcome the inertia that is inherent in some parts of the movement and the system we are challenging.

2. **Purpose and power** are intertwined. Power underpins our capacity to achieve our purpose. Building power is a multifaceted task and requires us to build a powerful movement, change the story, shift the money, diminish our opponents' power, and shift politics and the law. The paper considers some critical elements needed to change these dynamics to provide a framework for action.

3. **Seven strategic interventions** that deserve immediate movement attention and resourcing are proposed. Many of the ideas presented here will not be new to you, as many of you have been involved in shaping them, but this is the place they have been brought together and presented back to everyone. Deeper analysis and detailed design, while preferable, have been beyond the capacity invested to date but a priority for next steps.

The paper captures a work in progress. The movement is now exploring these ideas and proposals further, deciding what is to be done, how and by whom.
THE PROJECT

The rise of Tony Abbott has prompted much soul searching within the climate action movement. The climate strategy project arose from widespread acknowledgement that, under Tony Abbott, we are going backwards in terms of climate policy in Australia, and that the movement needs to re-invigorate itself and become far more powerful if we are to turn things around.

The project aimed to facilitate reflection within the climate movement, build an understanding of the current situation and an analysis of the movement, and what is required to align strategies and get on a winning path. The aim was to get a clearer picture of the critical steps needed to achieve deep cuts in domestic pollution, an end to Australia’s fossil fuel exports, and national leadership on the global stage.

The project did not intend to develop a single collaborative campaign nor resolve the different approaches of various groups. Rather, it took an eco-systems approach that values difference and seeks to understand how different parts of the movement might work together for maximum impact towards a shared vision. The intention was to collectively identify, scope and resource a number of strategic interventions to improve the effectiveness and alignment of our work, taking us closer to achieving our commonly held goals over the next three to five years.

The project has prioritised listening and connecting as a way of reinvigorating relationships and enthusiasm for whole-of-movement – rather than individual organisational – efforts. The project involved two stages: (i) March-June; and (ii) August to December 2014. It has involved hundreds of members of the climate movement through a digital survey, 1:1 conversations, and focus and discussion groups. This paper captures some of the conversations that have taken place and proposes options for future work. The aim is to garner strategic input and develop political buy-in from all parts of the movement. People all over the country have contributed to the analyses, and there is a palpable willingness to be involved in executing new strategic initiatives.

The ‘climate movement strategy project’ completes in December 2014 and movement leadership supported by the Climate Action Network Australia (CANA) will move forward with the next steps. The priority will be to transition CANA to a more nimble network support structure that prioritises common agenda setting in 2015 and reaching out to new allies.

CONTEXT

The global warming challenge is more urgent than ever. Yet in this critical decade we have lost political ground and important legislative reforms. We are gaining some momentum in slowing new fossil fuel capacity and accelerating the transition to clean energy, but on the whole, as a nation, we are failing to make the changes to our carbon-intensive economy and society that the science demands.

The battle for clean air, clean water, healthy communities and a safer climate is a contest of power. Big polluters and their political allies have significant influence over all levels and stripes of government, as the campaign against the mining super profits tax showed.

Support for action on climate change in 2006-2009 opened political space for economic reforms. Some argue that support was not sufficiently deep or stable, others that we mismanaged the moment. Either way we failed to secure the changes required resulting in deeper polarisation along party lines.

The minority parliament elected in 2010 provided the conditions to negotiate critical reforms anew but neither the government nor the movement did the work to inoculate the electorate from Tony Abbott’s “cost-of-living” war on the carbon tax, backed in by powerful vested interests.
More than that, the toxic tax debate gave way to a concerted ideological effort to dismantle any real progress on the clean energy transition and undermine civil society, and the environment movement in particular, by attacking the role of science, rolling back environmental protections, de-funding NGOs and challenging tax deductibility.

In order for our movement to move forward we need to understand the context in which we operate. This section canvasses some key elements of the context in terms of the problem, the politics, community attitudes and the movement. One thing is for sure, we’re unlikely to successfully untangle dirty politics and organised money, so our challenge is to develop robust strategies for working on these fronts simultaneously and build what we currently do not have: a movement that has the power and public support to change (and disrupt) the status quo.

THE PROBLEM

Greenhouse gas emissions are rising globally and the planet is warming as a result of human activity. Australia is almost 1°C warmer than a century ago. Many consequences of global warming are already evident and future risks are better understood. Australia can expect more intense heatwaves and bushfires, more dry weather and more heavy rainfall, greater coastal flooding and rising sea levels.¹ But according to some scientists and commentators it is worse than is generally publicly understood.² Professor David Karoly, for example, points to a conservative bias in IPCC reports.³ Professor Ross Garnaut notes that observations about actual climatic changes are consistently on the “worrying” side of projections.⁴

The established international consensus is for no more than 2°C of warming to prevent the worst impacts of dangerous climate change.⁵ Many in our movement argue that we must avoid an increase of more than 1.5°C and then return to a safe climate. The problem is that we are likely already committed to 1.5°C and have potentially gone beyond the bounds of a safe climate, leaving us with the threat of tipping points closer than we think.⁶

One challenge for the movement is that we have spent much of the last couple of decades arguing that the impacts of 2°C of global warming will be manageable and pathways to get there are achievable without significant disruption to society or the economy as we know it.⁷ Now that time is short and the challenges loom larger, avoiding dangerous climate requires deep and fast emissions reductions.

While Australia contributes 1-1.5% of global carbon pollution, we remain the highest per capita emitter.⁸ Australia’s fossil fuel exports constitute our biggest contribution to global emissions.

If our shared vision is for a safe and liveable climate at no more than 2°C, even on conservative projections, global society must decarbonise no later than 2050.⁹ PricewaterhouseCoopers sixth annual Low Carbon Economy Index says that the global annual decarbonisation rate required for 2°C is now 6.2% annually.¹⁰ This requires radical energy efficiency measures, fossil fuel reserves to be kept in the ground, significant transitions in transport, agriculture and forest sectors, and large-scale carbon drawdown.

There is no way of getting around it: Australia’s political economy is reliant on fossil fuels and requires significant disruption – culturally, politically and economically – if we are to ensure a safe and liveable climate. Embracing the economic disruption that comes with technological advancements, the political disruption that comes with the rise of minor party influence, the cultural disruption that comes with investment bankers recognising climate risk and conservative-voting consumers embracing clean energy can create the momentum necessary to overcome the inertia that is holding us back. If we are not willing to embrace disruption, global warming itself will create the disruption, and perhaps already is.

Simms argues that as a result of global warming and environmental limits being exceeded “economic upheaval in wealthy countries will be similar to that experienced in wartime.”¹¹ In some ways, disruption is inevitable and it’s just a matter of time.¹² In fact at least one IPCC member says that government should be putting our economies on a ‘war’ or Marshall Plan ‘rescue and rebuild’ style footing now to respond to the threats of global warming.¹³ Global warming is a threat to security, not just for nation states and their economies, but also for humanity as a whole. A war economy or
rescue and rebuild approach is a reasonable response by government to protect citizens and their way of life but here in Australia there are no signs this kind of emergency response being activated; nor if it was could we could guarantee those with our best interests at heart would end up in charge. The perception of the crisis is neither wide nor deep enough for a Marshall Plan to get traction.

Perceptions will change, either because we let the climate crisis play out, or because we create new perceptions – just as people like us have shone a light on crises in the past: abolitionists and slavery, feminists and sexism, civil rights activists and racism, environmentalists and pollution. But it’s not going to come about just because we tell everyone in shrill and panicked voices. We need to show them by pointing to the real and local impacts on people as well as places; help people make sense of what is already happening and what is coming.

Governments of all stripes make resources available during times of crises as we have seen during extreme weather events. What we need is for them to respond before more droughts, bushfires, and floods arrive, not after. Our job is to build an irresistible force for change that demands action to prevent ever more extreme events, rather than just responses after the fact.

THE POLITICS

Climate change has featured heavily in national debates over the past few decades and we have built significant support for action. When public opinion has been with us, we’ve shuffled towards reform. But on the whole we have failed to generate sufficient and widespread political will to sustain momentum for ambitious reforms.

Political leadership and public sentiment shape the conditions within which the movement operates: agenda setting, shifting opinions and opportunities to achieve short and long-term goals. Much has been written on the Abbott government’s culture wars, its unquestioning and deep support for big business, the attacks on environmentalism, and the undermining of the transition to a clean economy. But it’s worth covering a few key points to situate the decisions we need to make about our strategic priorities.

Climate change is a disruptive political force. The politics of global warming helped boost Rudd’s bid to replace Howard in 2007. But Rudd’s political approach, his failure to deliver real change, and the power of vested interests undermined cross-partisan support for action, and allowed Abbott to take out Turnbull and pursue an anti-action agenda. Gillard inherited this mess but failed to get the politics right before the 2010 election. The Independents–Greens–Labor agreement created an important opportunity, but reinforced political polarisation on the issue. Abbott’s persecution of Gillard and Labor’s credibility, and the lack of sustained movement pressure for ambition, created space for his cost-of-living hyperbole and left people feeling confused. Today Abbott formally rebuts claims of climate denial, all-the-while relentlessly pursuing the culture wars and polarising public opinion.

Neither of the dominant political parties have a position that is anywhere near the level of ambition required. To change this, first and foremost, the political and community context within which they operate needs to change substantially. Notwithstanding this challenge, there are important party dynamics that we need to understand.

From the outside, the federal Coalition presents a fairly consistent face: we must act on global warming, but not at the expense of our economy. This dampens the need for ambitious action and reinforces the age-old economy vs. environment frame. But inside, the Coalition is split with some supporting a market-based mechanism to reduce pollution as a more appropriate economic response than the ‘carbon tax gone, mission accomplished’ camp that remains ideologically opposed to action. Some conservative MPs are supportive of renewable energy and uneasy about coal seam gas. There are some potential allies inside the Coalition but we need a sophisticated strategy for activating them especially at state and party levels.

Labor is rebuilding, haunted by the ghosts of Rudd and Gillard and Abbott’s hammering. They know they can’t walk away from climate change, but feel burnt by the past seven years and continue to be squeezed from both left and right, internally and externally. They are attempting to straddle the middle ground between (as they see it) a “do-nothing”
Abbott government and “extreme Greens”, but neither the media nor public are really on board. Advocates for action don’t have the power internally to secure a stronger position.

Palmer has played into this space by disrupting the conservative vs. progressive split. Widespread public support for renewables has enabled Palmer and other conservative crossbench players to block changes to the clean energy measures so far, without having to vote against Palmer’s direct interests or backflip on their election positions. But it’s not a done deal, with the crossbench Senators growing in power with Lambie’s defection, and vulnerable to big business. With independent crossbench Senators exercising balance of power, the Greens have limited opportunity for positive legislative impact, especially if they don’t seize the opportunities to make the most of the power they do have.

One opportunity parliamentary and electoral politics does offer is a disruptive new era. Support for minority parties and independents hit record highs in the 2013 election at around 20% and 30% in the House and Senate respectively. Current and recent federal and state parliaments show the influence minor parties and independents can have. More minority governments in the future create new opportunities for legislative action on climate change. The question for us is how we maximise this opportunity.

Political players are unhappy with the climate movement, saying it’s all stick and no carrot. Labor says when it takes risks the movement isn’t there to back them. The Greens feel they end up playing the radical flank to a mostly conservatively-positioned movement, leaving them exposed to claims of extremism. Pro-action Liberal party players say that there is nothing in it for them and that movement players are too busy siding with Labor and the Greens to even reach out. Wherever you stand on these views, one thing is for certain: we haven’t created the political space we need to get what we want.

Shifts in the international arena during the G20 marginalised Abbott and his pro-coal stance, but we have serious work to do to better understand how power maps across the political landscape. Through the project’s survey, focus groups, 1:1 conversations and working groups, we have consistently identified that electoral power building is a critical and ongoing movement task. An in-depth political analysis will need to be the first step in constructing a strategy to build it. We need to know where individual players sit, who will move where and the opportunities to shift them. This is true at federal, state and local levels. We need to better understand how short-term tactical opportunities relate to longer-term power building; at present we have limited capacity to harness either.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

Abraham Lincoln noted that: “Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.” Shifting public attitudes and shaping the story are critical to achieving our goals, as we learned with the price on pollution and Abbott is learning with clean energy. But history shows even with public sentiment on our side we don’t always get what the people want, the 2003 Iraq war being a case in point.

It is no news that the story about climate change is heavily shaped by powerful vested interests with big money and the status quo on their side. Our job is to tell a more compelling story.

Polling, big data and communications research influences political decision-making more than ever. Targeted-value segments are replacing broader demographic groupings in political strategy, and messages are being tuned for the people likely to decide the 20 seats the major parties believe determine government. For some time, research has been telling the Coalition and Labor that environment and climate change concerns are not deciding how people vote in these seats. The Greens or the environment movement are not seen to deliver anything significant in these seats, though Greens voters do decide Labor’s electoral success in at least 13 federal seats.

So when Jean-Claude Juncker said: ‘We all know what to do, we just don’t know how to get re-elected after we’ve done it’, he was highlighting a challenge for the climate movement as much as for political parties and economic transformation.
The diagnosis isn’t all bad. A majority of Australians believe climate change is happening, and the level of denial or scepticism is over-estimated. In 2013, the CSIRO found that 81% of Australians accept that climate change is happening, with a major split, of 40% each; between those believing climate change is caused by human activity or by natural cycles. This issue does not necessarily need to be resolved in order for the government, industry or community to be obliged to respond.

What people are not clear about is who is best placed to handle the challenge, with Labor only slightly ahead of the Coalition, and the Greens well in front, proportionate to their vote (see Newspoll since 2008). Greens voters align more closely with broad demographic support for action amongst young people, older progressives and inner-city residents.

Swinging voters are more inclined to see environmental issues through a lens of scale and join a bigger majority in believing that they as an individual, or Australia as a nation, cannot tangibly impact climate change. This has been very successfully exploited by the Coalition. But localised impacts can help make the issue more manageable and more urgent. Recent polling by EMC shows that 63% expect more extreme weather events are likely and 76% believe this is likely caused by climate change.

Communications specialists tell us we need to reframe the debate. This has come up over and over again through the project. We need to move away from a fight about science – the science is in; our job is to work out what to do about it. Likewise we need to deal better with the cost frame – either lean in or move on. We need to tell a story about the big polluters (villains) and their political allies who are poisoning people and the planet and need to be controlled by the community (victims/heroes) and those who wish to represent us. Re-telling this story requires us to reconsider not just the message but who is best placed to deliver it, to whom and how.

Shellenberger and Nordhaus highlighted the risks associated with framing global warming as an environmental issue and we are still struggling to break free from this bind. There are benefits in some advocates mobilising those audiences who believe environmental protection is in all of our interests, but if we don’t branch out, we won’t engage a broader audience. If we don’t name who is responsible, we risk alienating our audiences because they end up thinking it is their entire fault and that they don’t have the power to change the situation.

The movement needs a compelling story and ways of engaging and airing diverse and credible voices delivering the right message at the right time to the right people via the right channel. This work has featured as a key challenge throughout the project’s survey, 1:1 conversations and discussions. Developing sophisticated communications strategies for such a complex issue is an ongoing and reflexive project, not a one-off. Just as important will be ensuring we hone the movements’ capacity to develop such strategies in an ongoing way.

THE MOVEMENT

The term “climate movement” is a somewhat contested concept. To even label it a movement risks excluding people. But it does not have to be this way. Social movements embracing very diverse constituencies have a long history of catalysing significant change. We should not be afraid of embracing this tradition, as long as we prioritise the work of bringing people with us. If it helps, we can be a “movement of movements” responding to global warming, fighting for clean air and water, driving new clean energy industries, protecting land and healthy communities, and maintaining a liveable climate now and for future generations. For the purpose of this paper, when you read ‘movement’, think ‘movement of movements’.

I have identified five lenses through which the movement approaches climate problems and solutions: pollution, impacts, clean technology solutions, land management and conservation, and justice. Because we have very different ways of thinking about and engaging in our work, we have a tendency to emphasise our differences rather than our shared vision
and the potentially mutually reinforcing strategies different movements prioritise. However, each of these five lenses is critically important and we need each of them in order to see and to tell the whole story.

When traditional owners, farmers and regional communities work to protect their land, water and future from unsafe mining, they are challenging the same polluters as environmental groups explaining the causes of global warming. When renewable energy advocates propose the transition to an affordable clean-energy economy, we cannot expect that conversation will always reference extreme weather, but it helps if they can connect the dots. What is critical is that some part of our movement draws the conversation together, that we build support for the whole picture and link these skirmishes to the bigger battle of the story so that we don’t lose ground overall.

The emergence of different “movement circles” has created a leadership vacuum in the space that ties us altogether. This has been compounded by past experiences, often a lack of trust, a concentration of resources, and the constraints and priorities of particular organisations getting in the way of nurturing a persistent and united movement. The imperatives of NGOs to safeguard their brand and funding base has made it difficult to ask movement-centric questions, such as ‘What needs to be done?’ rather than ‘What should our organisation do?’ and ‘Who takes responsibility for the interests of the movement as a whole?’

As a relative outsider to the movement, I observe an under-developed analysis of power within the climate movement. There is too little shared understanding of the kind of power that entrenches the big polluters and their allies, or the kind of power that will be required to win sweeping and lasting change. As a consequence, few organisations have focussed on power-building activities, and NGOs have tended to prioritise legislative reform based on an elite model of power while under-investing in the hard work of building and mobilising a powerful base that can sustain us over time. The ascendancy of Tony Abbott has starkly demonstrated the lack of a powerful and organised countervailing political force. We have hit a wall that, at present, we do not have the power to break through.
PURPOSE AND POWER

"Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change."

– Martin Luther King

The causes of global warming lay deep in humanity’s recent relationship with nature. It is not just how we practically live: cheap and dirty fuels; inefficient transport and industrial practices; unsustainable agriculture and deforestation. It’s also how we think: chronic short-termism; concentrated political and economic power; unwavering belief in technological progress; unsustainable resource consumption; and a fetish with economic growth. These behaviours and attitudes also underpin inequality and poverty. Global warming offers us an opportunity to challenge these dynamics and create a better relationship with nature and each other.

The climate movement is trying to deal with a complex system of problems and injustices. No single power analysis or type of power can deliver what we want. If our broad goals include ending domestic emissions, stopping the export of emissions and playing a positive international role, this requires transformations in many sectors at many political levels not just in governments but in markets and society as well.

We need power to influence legislative, financial and societal decision-making. We need the power to overcome the ideological, economic and cultural power of our opponents. And most of all, we need the power to overcome inertia in the current system, not just in the world, but in our movements too.

Sound Alliance Lead Organiser Joe Chrastil says we also need to differentiate between different levels of power. There is a big difference between having ‘access to decision makers’, having power to be ‘invited to the negotiating table’, power to actually ‘make the deal’ and the power to ‘keep and expand the deal’. At times, the climate movement has confused the first two with the latter two. We need to ensure we are building the kind of power that not only secures outcomes, but also has the capacity to sustain and expand them.

If we agree power is required to achieve purpose and we accept that our current power is insufficient, then we need to identify the dynamics that can help us build and shift power in the short and longer term. We need a way of understanding how we can create the necessary conditions to build the multifaceted power we need to achieve our purpose: people power, cultural power, relational power, economic power, electoral and political power. The framework for action (below) is an attempt to capture the necessary conditions and their relationships to each other. These conditions are processes and outcomes, means and ends.
This framework for action can help us develop a shared understanding of what needs to be done and guide movement priorities. The five dimensions in this framework are outlined below.

**Build a powerful movement**

*Goal:* A powerful, vibrant, well-connected and growing movement that is continually winning bigger and more ambitious reforms to cut greenhouse pollution and solve the climate crisis.

**What does a powerful movement involve?**

- Multiple alliances around shared goals;
- Enhanced strategic capability that maximises opportunities;26;
- ‘Whole of movement perspective’ valued and nurtured;
- Recognition of the power of organised people, not just elites;
- ‘Salient information from the field’ and from allies informs planning and analysis;
- Strong links between players across movements;
- Diverse, organised, growing and visible base;
- Distributed leadership;
- Greater reflection of the diversity of civil society, less perception of eNGO dominance;
- Appropriate resources deployed for maximum impact;
- Learning and sharing culture valued across movement.

**Change the story**

*Goal:* A compelling and resonant story frames the dominant narrative in a way that engages our base, shifts the centre, neutralises our opponents and delivers outcomes for a safer climate.

**What does changing the story involve?**

- Powerful and empowering frames with consistent and resonant messages: global warming seen as happening now not later; impacting people not just places; here not just far away; visible villains and heroes (e.g. big polluters exposed as bad guys, clean industry leaders seen as good guys, community with roles to play and power to win);
- Shared and well-thought-through communications strategy;
- Evidenced-based and researched audience analysis informing communication strategy;
- Diverse and credible élite and grassroots messengers communicating story to their constituencies;
- Strategic and visible media presence running our story in multiple outlets, not just preaching to our base;
- Multiple and direct communications channels reaching the right people with the right message at the right time.

**Shift the money**

*Goal:* Climate-related risks and opportunities in the finance sector change the dominant narrative. Advocacy by, and financial decision-making within, the wider business community results in reduced backing for dirty industries and increased support for clean economy initiatives.

**What does shifting the money involve?**

- Vibrant finance and divestment campaigns operating with a high level of financial sophistication;
- Banks and major superannuation funds under sustained public pressure to be part of the climate solution rather than part of the problem;
- Significantly increasing cost of finance for polluting projects as a result of higher risk profile;
- Decreasing cost of finance for climate solutions;
- Consumers demanding clean energy and other solutions;
- Powerful clean-energy industry lobby;
- Key business and industry groups no longer able to advocate so strongly against climate action;
- Strong business voice arguing the case for urgent action.
**Diminish the power of our opponents**

**Goal:** Individuals and institutions aligned with big polluters, vested interests and deniers no longer have the power to control a political and business agenda and to hold back action on climate change.

**What does diminishing the power of opponents involve?**

- Positioning our opponents clearly in the frame (every compelling story needs a bad guy);
- Exposing the undue influence of big polluters and other vested interests over political decisions;
- Marginalising denialist ideology;
- Exposing funders of denialist think tanks;
- Holding companies/brands to account for hiding behind industry groups who do their dirty work;
- Splitting conservative political players on support for renewable energy.

**Shift the politics and the law**

**Goal:** Political conditions ensure only political parties with effective climate policies are electable, the anti-action agenda is marginalised and laws are introduced and enforced to solve the climate crisis.

**What does shifting the politics involve?**

- Mobilising and organising constituencies in places that matter to hold elected representatives to account;
- People changing their vote on the basis of our agenda in seats seen to decide government;
- Robust and sustained influence on Labor party processes;
- Robust and sustained influence on Coalition party processes;
- Elite opinion (thought leaders) influencing political party positioning;
- Strong business voice for action / diminished business voice against action;
- Solid union pressure on Labor to take a strong position;
- Greens and other minor parties with commitment and power to compel a pro-climate agenda or block attacks;
- Popular independent candidates with commitment and power to compel a pro-climate agenda or block attacks;
- Existing laws are used to their full potential to solve the climate crisis and further strengthened.

These lists capture only some of the work that needs to be done to shift the power dynamics. This is not a realistic list of what we can do immediately, nor it is a wish list of what would be nice. As Winston Churchill famously said: “**It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we must do what is required.**”

Today we are a long way from having sufficient power to achieve our goals. The framework described above outlines the work that is required. It is the long, hard slog that we do not have time for but is nonetheless essential.

The next section outlines a series of strategic interventions that can set us on a path to building the power that we need – people power, cultural power, economic power, political power – by establishing critical movement infrastructure and prioritising the work which can progress the framework for action outlined above.
STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

At the outset of this project, we said we would try to identify a number of strategic interventions that could enhance the effectiveness of our work and get us on the path to winning. Drawing on the framework for action, analyses of the current state of play and many conversations with members of the movement, seven interventions have been proposed for consideration:

1. **Resource a whole-of-movement perspective** by rebuilding a movement institution to better serve the functions and diversity of allies needed to build power and to take the work of our common agenda forward.

2. **Align strategy** by developing a common agenda for environment-climate groups; a process for engaging civil society in developing ownership and influencing this common agenda; and supporting ongoing collaboration around specific goals.

3. **Deliver a powerful and resonant story** by establishing a movement communications hub that can act as a backbone resource to support the whole movement to communicate more consistently and effectively.

4. **Revitalise our grassroots constituencies** by establishing a movement organising hub to share analytical and data resources and build skills to support our collective community organising efforts.

5. **Build political power** to create the political conditions to win and sustain serious legislative reforms.

6. **Accelerate the energy revolution** to transform the energy sector, recruit new allies and diminish the power of our opponents.

7. **Expose the undue influence of deniers & polluters** through systematic analysis and campaigning.

Each of these interventions incorporates at least one or more element of our framework for action. For example, a new movement organisation is as much about building a powerful movement as it is about changing the story and shifting the politics; energy campaigning addresses all five elements of the framework; electoral campaigning helps build the movement, change the story and shift the politics.

Additionally I’ve drawn on Lukes three faces of power: direct political involvement; developing infrastructure; and ideology and worldview, to analyse the value of each of these interventions.27
1. RESOURCE A WHOLE-OF-MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Our movement of movements needs a multi-faceted system of innovation and learning (plan, act, observe, reflect, plan again) to define common agendas, build powerful movement(s), change the stories and culture, shift the money, diminish our opponents’ power and shift politics and the law. The system needs to be robust if it’s going to confront the complexity, power and inertia underpinning the status quo. It must create momentum in political, economic and social systems and demonstrate the diversity and power behind a push for a safe, clean and equitable society. The system will need to be strategic, adaptive and resourceful.

What kind of movement infrastructure can support such a system? Conversations with grassroots and NGO leaders point to an institution that facilitates relationships and alignment while valuing diversity and emergence. It would need to connect existing climate movement actors big and small, strengthen connection between the climate, coal, gas and renewables movements and better engage health, union, faith, aid and development, farmers, First Nations’ peoples and other civil society actors. We need to move from disparate clusters to a network woven by strong links.

I propose we re-establish a movement institution to support a diverse and growing network that operates behind the scenes, does not compete with existing voices but helps lift them up, does not create unnecessary bureaucracy or a drain on movement resources but is sufficiently resourced to:

- Enhance strategic capacity;
- Identify shared interests and common agendas amongst network members;
- Connect and convene network members including grassroots and NGOs to shape strategy;
- Activate and support new allies to develop ownership and invest resources;
- Develop distributed leadership;
- Ignite campaign collaborations but leave others to run them;
- (Potentially) Involve and align philanthropic foundation strategy;
- (Potentially) Coordinate backbone resources such as the Organising Hub; and

The purpose of such a network is to support a thousand flowers to bloom and hundreds of gardens to grow. Primarily, it would facilitate processes for developing common agendas and strategic priorities, relationship and leadership development. Collaboration would occur through multiple alliances, campaigns and special projects. The network organisation would not run campaigns but would help others to do so. For example, in the short-term it could facilitate working groups on hitherto neglected areas of work – strategic litigation, food security, energy efficiency, or climate security – and take initial responsibility for bringing relevant players into the conversation and then support distributed leaders to drive the work forwards.

We could start with existing players: people and groups concerned about pollution (coal and gas campaigners, eNGOs, health), low-carbon economy (solutions, tech, energy efficiency, transport), climate impacts (climate justice, aid and development, fire-fighters, faith groups), land management and conservation (traditional owners, farmers, eNGOs), and expand from there. We could structure the network around existing institutions.

CANA in its current form cannot play this role because it has lost relevance in recent years. CANA was established by environment and NGO groups and has largely focused on coordinating short-term international climate negotiations and legislative reform for capping pollution. With the emergence of movements such as those opposing fossil fuels, growing clean energy or protecting our health, other network support organisations such as Lock the Gate, Climate and Health Alliance, The Sunrise Project have entered into a space CANA once occupied alone. A rebranded, restructured, reinvigorated network initiative can connect the work of these networks and support less engaged civil society actors.
Re-Amp case study

There are a number of models that might serve the Australian climate movement, but the Re-Amp network provides a useful starting point for discussions.

The Re-Amp network grew out of an initiative of the Garfield Foundation which invested a core team of three people and $2 million to apply a systems-thinking approach to addressing climate change, to align the work of non-profits and philanthropic foundations, to map the systems, identify leverage points, build commitment to shared goals and establish a network to see it through. Re-Amp has grown from 10 to 160 organisations over 10 years, strategically recruiting the right organisations at the right time. They prioritise a distributed leadership while resourcing movement functions through a small network core of four people plus five working group leaders and five associates partially funded by the network and housed in member organisations. They distribute grants for priority work of $2-4 million annually and have established shared assets such as a learning and progress centre, media centre, organising hub and a network intranet for sharing resources and enabling communication. They focus on five key areas: coal, renewables, energy efficiency, transport and capping pollution.


2. ALIGN STRATEGY: DEVELOP A COMMON AGENDA

Social movements and collaborative institutions benefit from unity of purpose and diversity of tactics. Collective Impact proponents Kania and Kramer say the first condition for success in collectively solving complex problems is developing a common agenda. While we are not applying a Collective Impact model here, we have recognised the need to develop a compelling and inspiring vision to bring parts of the movement and civil society together, something to ground the institution described above. There are at least three versions of what we want:

1. A collective vision and shared goals for climate and environment organisations;
2. A broader initiative with a much wider audience to engage non-eNGO civil society actors in developing relationships and ownership of the broader movement agenda; and
3. The ongoing need to identify, articulate and support collaboration around specific goals.

At the start of phase two of this project, some of us (environment and climate groups) came together around ‘shared asks’ but did not in the time available develop a shared platform. Many of you believe this would be valuable and asked that I do a draft on shared vision, goals and highlighted points of consensus and conflict. However, this proved to be out of scope for this project. Collective Impact proponents suggest 12-18 months for developing a common agenda in a multi-stakeholder process. The Re-Amp Network took a year. If we want a common agenda that climate groups adhere to, we need to develop maximum buy-in and commitment, and a way of tracking progress towards our shared goals, otherwise it will likely be another policy wish list reminiscent of those we have produced before and discarded.

If we agree that our “movement of movements” will benefit from a compelling vision and shared goals whilst accepting different strategic priorities and tactical diversity, then we still need something that has integrity, references the science, actually deals with the causes not just the symptoms, differentiates between political, policy and communications strategy, appeals to a broader audience and fosters unity. And then we need the discipline to pursue it.
Compared with the political gap between most of the political elite and us, the differences within and between our movements are trivial. Big picture, our visions are closely aligned: a safer climate; protected land, water, future; clean air, clean water, healthy communities; decarbonisation by 2035. So why haven’t we done this in an effective and sustained way before?

In general terms, climate advocates seek solutions that cut pollution here and overseas; reduce energy demand overall but specifically for fossil fuels; move us to 100% clean energy; develop more sustainable agricultural and industrial processes; stop deforestation; and build clean transport. These solutions also need to build community power, protect our health and create a fairer society.

We face a big challenge in moving from big-picture visions and goals to negotiating specific asks; encountering the tension between what is necessary and what is politically realistic. The diagram (left) illustrates this tension and highlights the challenge of identifying strategies that build real solutions within the realm of political realism, which itself changes over time. It also points to the need to prevent our opponents successfully achieving false solutions that are politically realistic but will not drive the transition.

When we dilute our demands to fit within perceived political reality to the extent that they no longer offer real solutions, we’re doing our opponents’ dirty work for them. Now, more than ever, our job is to communicate a careful view of the science and an ambitious view of the solutions. Our cause benefits nothing from diminishing our demands before we even get to the negotiating table. If we want ambition, we need to raise the ambit. And if we’re serious about addressing global warming and cutting pollution to avoid dangerous climate change, it’s our responsibility to communicate what is really needed and expand the political space that makes it achievable.

Discussions with various movement players have highlighted the need for backbone resources that can serve the movement as a whole. In the USA, there are a numerous backbone organisations providing data and analytics support, voter files, strategic analysis, communications back up, organiser recruitment, and training and placement services. All of these resources strengthen organisational and movement efforts. The next two proposed interventions are backbone resources that could be connected to the new movement organisation or operate separately. We can start with the minimal viable product and expand if it works. We could second one or more staff members from different organisations to act as the hub housed in an existing institution or establish one or more new organisations.

3. DELIVER A POWERFUL STORY: ESTABLISH A MOVEMENT COMMUNICATIONS HUB

The climate movement faces a number of story-telling challenges: ensuring the right people hear the right messages from the right messengers from the right channels at the right time. The majority of our communications are not hitting the mark; they are often unclear, fragmented and largely go unreported and unheard. Small groups are overloaded and struggling to deliver the stories they do have to tell. Big groups have capacity but much of it is invested in brand development and donor engagement. NGOs are structured for advocacy, not organising, and tend (with exceptions) to favour branded spokespeople over building diverse and credible voices. The limited news we generate is too often trapped in more progressive outlets preaching to our base. And we’re not sharing communications resources in ways that benefit more than our brands. We need a communications hub that can help us develop greater capacity, attend to movement needs and change the story.
Movement communications functions required:

- Coordinate and share communications research;
- Develop framing and messaging strategy;
- Socialise communications strategy (literacy across movement, especially grassroots);
- Develop diverse and credible voices: recruitment, liaison, training;
- Develop reactive media capacity and proactive media planning capability;
- Develop non-media message delivery: paid, owned digital and organising;
- Communications capacity training and development;
- Ideas factory for news, facts, ideas, (removing policy & solutions duplication).

Options for serving these functions:

- Outsource to a communications agency but with a more collective arrangement;
- Delegate distributed roles inside existing movement organisations;
- Second staff to a ‘communications hub’ that can lead on priority functions; or
- Establish new organisation such as Climate Nexus or the smaller Re-Amp media centre.

4. REVITALISE GRASSROOTS CONSTITUENCIES: ESTABLISH AN ORGANISING HUB

Resources in the climate movement are concentrated in organisations, which favour elite models of power and emphasise insider track lobbying. These efforts are bearing minimal fruit because we do not have the necessary power to get a genuine seat at the negotiating table, let alone make, keep or expand any deals that are made. Many of us recognise that grassroots organising presents us with an opportunity to build constituencies that can wield cultural, electoral and consumer power. A lot of the grunt work that underpins effective organising such as research and analysis of target audiences and best-practice engagement techniques, data and analytics tools, and education and training support spans campaigns and organisations. The infrastructure for building a solid organising machine can be resourced and shared collectively, while still maintaining the integrity of our targeted activities. An organising hub would allow us to pool resources that can support grassroots and NGO efforts to organise powerful, motivated and sustained constituencies. If we grow out of these resources we can look to specialising in different areas as happens in the USA with stand-alone organisations such as the Analyst Institute, Catalyst, and the New Organising Institute.

Movement organising functions that need to be served:

*Building movement organising capacity*

- Develop one or more campaigns for organisers to collaborate on;
- Help build buy-in through strategic conversations for CEOs, boards, donors;
- Develop and share planning frameworks with organising objectives built-in;
- Coordinate an organising conference to build knowledge, strengthen networks and develop the profession;
- Consider options for organiser recruitment, placement and support.

*Research, analysis, data & analytics*

- Analysing research for audience profiling and targeting: focus groups, polling, values segments;
- Electoral results and demographic analysis and mapping;
- Tactical effectiveness: best practice framework and evaluation of supporter and voter engagement;
- Attitudinal and behavioural analysis, such as political behaviour, community involvement;
- Baseline for “our” supporters: geo-density, demographics, elasticity;
- Shared language and metrics and tools for tracking for movement building.
Education & training: key capacities for organisers:

- Campaign strategy;
- Community organising;
- Educating-the-educators / train-the-trainers;
- Learning organisation development.

5. BUILD ELECTORAL POWER

We need the electoral power to decide who forms government, and on what terms, and for MPs and candidates to know that at forthcoming local, state or federal elections they cannot be elected without an ambitious and effective plan to respond to global warming.

We need a concerted effort to permanently shift the electoral pulse and for climate change and fossil fuel development to be understood as such a serious threat to our way of life that we can no longer afford for our response to be split along partisan lines.

Campaigns to organise locality-based or cultural constituencies can use elections to demonstrate power and help get the movement on track to communicate the whole story. Locality-based and constituency campaigns can communicate scale and urgency by highlighting local and regional impacts on people, as well as the environment, here and now.

We will benefit from ongoing electoral collaboration and coordination (even if it's not jointly branded) from now until at least 2020, backed by better backbone resources. Building this effort allows us to organise our base for bigger and bolder demands, as we also build community leaders and infrastructure to support them.

In my view it was a big mistake to abandon the Big Switch campaign after the 2007 election. It had the makings of the kind of campaign effort that could have sustained us throughout the ups and downs we have experienced since.

6. ACCELERATE THE ENERGY REVOLUTION

The global energy revolution is happening faster than most people thought possible even a few years ago. As renewable energy hits economies of scale and continues its relentless march down the cost curve, it is having a disruptive impact on energy markets the world over. Combined with energy efficiency improvements reducing overall demand for electricity in Australia and some other countries, the incumbent fossil fuel generators and retailers are facing the prospect of a ‘death spiral’ of rising costs and falling revenue. This is a disruptive trend that is well and truly underway. Our challenge is to accelerate it.

Over the past two years there has been a massive upswing in community opposition to the expansion of coal and gas exports. While there is much more work required in this area and considerably more resources brought to bear, the campaigns are on a rapid growth trajectory and have seen vibrant and sustained collaboration.

In relation to the domestic energy sector, the situation is somewhat different. While there has been a concerted rear-guard action to protect the RET from being scrapped, there is considerable need (and opportunity) to improve collaboration on the domestic energy sector campaign and to significantly upscale the campaign on at least four fronts:

1. The rapid expansion of rooftop solar has created a new generation of ‘solar citizens’ with significant political potential. Efforts to organise this new political constituency have yielded some fruit but much potential for expansion remains.

2. Energy efficiency programs continue to offer low hanging fruit to reduce emissions in the immediate term and to drive the disruption in energy markets, however there is a lack of sustained campaigning in this area.

3. Recent trials of consumer campaigns to switch people away from polluting power are showing serious potential for disruptive impact. GetUp’s collaboration with Powershop in Victoria has the potential to become an ‘open source’ national program that serves multiple functions – reducing demand for coal power, increasing demand for
renewables, raising funds for membership based organisations, and potentially enabling new membership based organisations that have hitherto been disengaged to actively engage their members in being part of the solution to climate change.

4. According to the Australian Energy Market Operator, there is now at least 7.5GW of excess generating capacity in the National Electricity Market (NEM). This is the key driver behind the anti-RET campaign of the incumbent generators. Put simply, if new renewable energy comes online, it will displace existing (profitable) coal plants. The missing piece in the public campaign around the renewable energy target is that nobody is prosecuting a sustained and high profile campaign to phase out existing coal plants.

We must build the power of the clean energy sector including industry, business, community and consumer voices that can directly challenge the undue influence of incumbent polluting industries currently influencing the political and business agenda.

7. EXPOSE THE UNDUE INFLUENCE OF DENIERS & POLLUTERS

During this project, we have recognised the need to systematically, strategically and actively confront the thought leaders, powerbrokers, institutions and networks that are holding us back, and expose their undue influence on our political decision-makers and the public conversation. Up until now, we have not done a comprehensive analysis of these people, the institutions, their line of argument, and how and where they have influence. This climate strategy project has commissioned an initial analysis to inform the development of a strategy to diminish their power: Direct Inaction: Surveying and cataloguing the movement against climate change action in Australia. This work will be presented at the retreat face-to-face and printed copies of the report circulated.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

These strategic interventions are currently being pursued and concrete proposals are taking shape but there is more work to be done to making these interventions a reality. The climate movement strategy project will wrap up in 2014 and a new phase of movement agenda setting will take place as a priority for 2015.

Stay tuned for how you can be involved by signing up at http://www.climatestrategyproject.com/updates. Your contacts will be shared with the Climate Action Network Australia.
REFERENCES


14 Klein, N. (2014) “One way or another, everything changes”, Introduction to This Changes Everything, California: Simon and Schuster.


20 Ibid.