

CONVERSATION GUIDE



TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Children are already hearing about climate change – at school, online and in everyday life. So, what's the best way to tackle this topic?

This guide will help you talk about climate change in ways that are honest, age-appropriate and hopeful.

BE CURIOUS!

- 1 Lead with curiosity. Find out what they've heard and what questions they have, and respond directly vs jumping into a detailed explanation:

.....
"What have you heard about climate change? Is there anything you are wondering about?"

MATCH CONTENT TO AGE

- 2 Be honest, but also age appropriate. Match the depth of your responses to what they're ready for – and follow their lead on when they want to know more.

.....
It's okay to say:

"I'm not sure. Let's find out together."

ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS

- 3 Worry, sadness and anger are all normal responses to a serious problem. Name any feelings and make space for them in the conversation. Let the children in your life know they're not alone.

.....
"I understand why you feel worried about that. What part feels hardest?"

BUILD THEIR AGENCY

- 4 Pair every difficult truth with details on where and how we're making progress. Remind them that many people around the world are working on solutions, and find ways to give them agency.

.....
"We cut pollution when we walk or ride our bikes. Could we get others doing it?"



SIMPLE EXPLANATIONS



When a child wants a clear and simple explanation, try these:

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE?

Our planet is getting hotter. That heat is changing Australia's weather – making our summers hotter, big storms and floods worse, and lengthening bushfire seasons.

Scientists measure this, and we can feel it.

- *"What changes have you noticed about the weather?"*
- *"Last summer felt really hot didn't it? Summers are getting hotter and more dangerous and that's part of what climate change means."*

WHY IS IT HAPPENING?

Traditionally, we have made energy by burning coal, oil and gas, so we can switch our lights on, and power things like our cars and factories.

When we do that, it sends invisible pollution into the air which traps heat around the Earth.

- *"It's like putting an extra blanket on the Earth – it traps heat and makes our planet too hot. The more pollution we add, the thicker the blanket gets and the hotter and more sick our planet gets."*

HOW DO WE FIX IT?

By using the sun and wind to make energy, instead of using coal, oil or gas, we can switch on our lights and power our cars without polluting.

- *"Australia has lots of sun and wind, and we are really good at using it to make electricity already."*

IS IT HOPELESS?

We are making progress with more and more of our energy coming from the sun and wind. These are clean, never run out and cheaper, too, which helps families save money.

- *"You may have already seen solar panels on rooftops – they turn sunlight into electricity. We're now a world leader in rooftop solar. That's something to be proud about!"*



HOW TO EXPLAIN IN MORE DETAIL



Use this when a child wants more detail, or starts asking follow-up questions. There's no age rule – follow their lead.

WHAT DOES CLIMATE CHANGE LOOK LIKE IN AUSTRALIA NOW?

In Australia, we're already living through hotter summers, more dangerous bushfire seasons, sudden heavier downpours and flooding, and damage to really special places like the Great Barrier Reef.

This is changing our way of life, today. The summers you're growing up in are already hotter than the ones your parents and grandparents experienced as kids. More school days and weekend sports are being cancelled. There are fewer days when it's safe for kids to go outside and play. We are paying more for things like insurance.

It's OK if this feels worrying. I worry about it, too. It's a really big problem, but there are lots of people working on solutions.

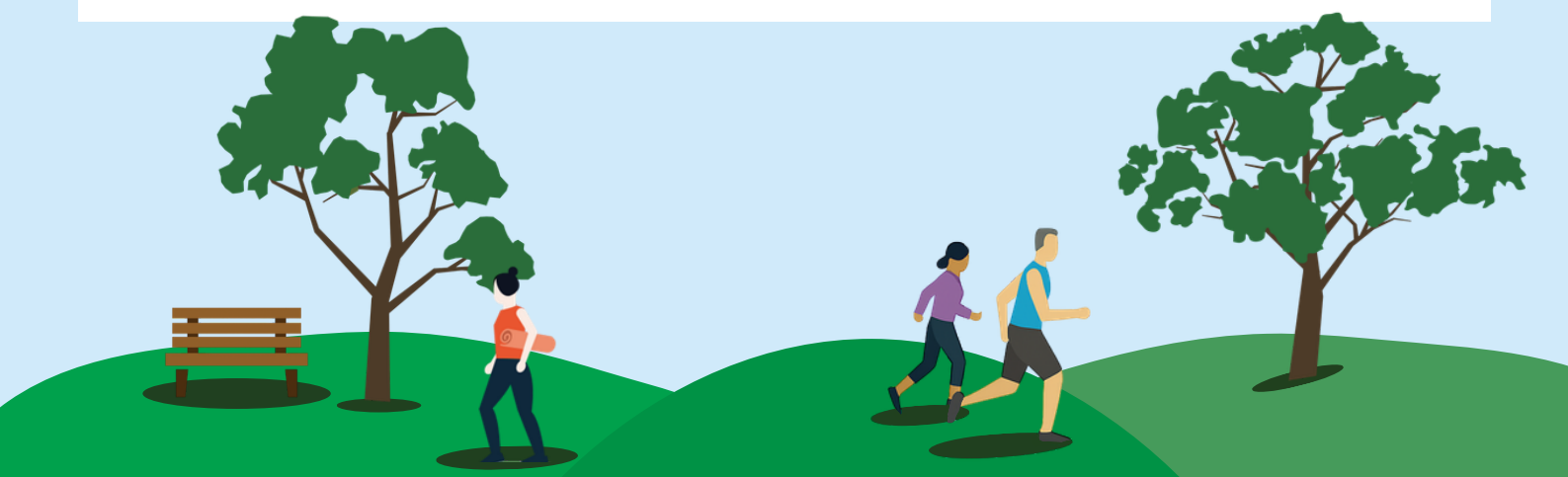
→ *"Climate change is already changing what Australian summers feel like, how long fire seasons run, and how often big floods hit."*

WHY DOES THE WORLD KEEP BURNING COAL, OIL AND GAS WHEN IT'S CAUSING THESE PROBLEMS?

For a long time, the world relied on coal, oil and gas for energy. We built our cities and industries around them and it's a big and complex system that some people make money from, and which takes time and effort to change.

But we've also known about this problem for a long time, and today we have better ways of making energy without pollution. So we can solve this, and we're starting to see progress.

→ *"The science on this has been clear for decades. We know what's causing it, and we know what needs to change."*



HOW TO EXPLAIN IN MORE DETAIL

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WHAT SOLUTIONS EXIST?

Renewable energy from the sun and wind is now widely used across Australia. It's now the cheapest way to make electricity; cheaper than coal or gas. We can use that electricity to power our homes, cars and businesses – and store it in batteries for whenever we need it.

This shift is well underway with more people choosing to buy things like electric cars. The question is how fast we make all these changes.

→ *"Solar and wind are already the cheapest way to make new electricity in Australia, and most things can be powered by electricity. We have every advantage – lots of sunshine, wind, and space."*

WHAT PROGRESS IS ALREADY HAPPENING?

Clean energy is growing quickly in Australia. More than 40% of our electricity now comes from renewables compared to next to nothing when I was a kid.

One in three Australian homes has rooftop solar, and places like Tasmania already completely run on renewable electricity.

This shift is happening worldwide, with clean energy growing fast and starting to supply more electricity than coal. This shift is picking up speed.

→ *"Our energy system is getting cleaner every year, and the pace of change is getting faster."*



HOW TO NAVIGATE HARDER QUESTIONS

“ARE WE GOING TO BE OKAY?”

Be honest without catastrophising.

It's okay to feel worried about this – lots of us do. What happens next depends on the choices people make – and more people than ever are working to make things better. The faster we cut climate pollution, the better things will be.

“ARE GOVERNMENTS DOING ENOUGH?”

Not yet – but everyone in the community who is pushing for change is making a difference.

Governments are responding: with more clean energy being built, encouraging the sale of more electric cars and setting stronger climate targets. That's been driven by people power.

“WHAT'S THE POINT OF TRYING IF IT DOESN'T FIX EVERYTHING?”

Change only happens when lots of people act together.

We can band together - in our street, at our school or in our community - and those actions all add up. When people act together to push governments and companies to do more they shape what happens next.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO APPROACH THESE CONVERSATIONS.

It's never about getting it “perfect”. What matters most is having an open conversation that helps the children in our lives feel safe, informed and empowered.

Want more support? Try these:



Australian Psychological Society: [How to talk to children about climate change](#)



Parents for Climate: [How to talk to kids of different ages to engage them on climate change and environmental issues](#)



Climate Council: [Climate Anxiety Toolkit](#)