



Paris Not Far Enough - *Even in a Kayak*

Could one man's kayak odyssey change climate politics in Australia the way that Gandhi's walk to the sea changed the history of India?

- *Paris Agreement will not reduce global warming sufficiently*
- *Eminent Australians behind new petition declaring Climate Emergency*
- *Kayak campaigner calls for urgent action*

BALLINA, AUSTRALIA: The Paris Agreement on Climate Change comes into effect on November 4. Even when Australia eventually joins the other 73 countries who have ratified the agreement, it still won't go far enough, says kayaker Steve Posselt: **"Even if everything promised at Paris is delivered, our planet will likely see global warming exceed a 3°C degrees rise above pre-industrial temperatures within this century. This is nothing short of a climate emergency."**

Connecting chaotic climate events

In January last year, Posselt, a 64 year old environmental campaigner, began a 5,000km kayaking odyssey has seen him go from Canberra to Paris, taking in many of the world's 'hot spots' on the way. An epic journey by wheeled kayak over ten months to connect chaotic climate events: Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, Eastern USA Freeze, Canberra firestorms, UK flooding and French droughts.

"I wanted to draw attention to the fact that these events are all highly unusual and can clearly be attributed to global warming," says Steve.

He undertook the arduous journey to gather support for the Paris Agreement. But back in Australia, he says we need to take it one step further.

Lack of action costly

"Australians are worried by their government's lack of action," he says. **"No other country in the world emits more carbon per capita than Australia,** and on top of that Australia is the largest exporter of coal in the world with forecasts set to double our exports in the next 10 years."

"The science is unequivocal. It's time to end fossil fuel extraction for export. It's time to wean ourselves off this climate changing energy source. Deep emission cuts must be made now. The longer we wait, the costlier it will be."

The burning of fossil fuels releases CO₂ and other greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere increasing the concentration from pre-industrial levels of some 280 parts per million (ppm) to more than 400 ppm; a massive increase.

Three degrees global warming means no Arctic or Antarctic ice and no glaciers, resulting in sea level rise and catastrophic climatic disruptions. Pacific islands becoming inhabitable. Coral reefs wiped out. Conflicts over water and food causing unprecedented numbers of refugees who will be migrating for survival.

State of Emergency

“We need to accept the science, **ask our government to declare a climate emergency, and immediately mobilise resources,**” says Posselt, who for this reason is gathering signatures on a petition calling for parliament to declare a climate emergency and take action accordingly, including:

- An immediate ban on new coal and gas developments, and full plan for coal closures.
- An emergency-speed transition to zero emissions including for greenhouse gases other than carbon dioxide, and an all-sector national energy efficiency plan.
- Find ways to reduce atmospheric greenhouse gases back to a safe level.
- Strong public leadership and honesty about the problem and the path to solving it.

Campaign backed by big names

Margaret Hender – one of the organisers behind the *Climate Emergency Declaration petition* – says: “Our ask is quite specific. A climate emergency declaration would command the mobilisation of resources at the scale and speed necessary to protect us all – not dissimilar to WWII mobilisation back in 1940-1941.” The campaign was launched with an open letter in *The Age* in June 2016, signed by 24 eminent Australians.

One was Paul Barratt, a former Secretary of the Departments of Defence and Primary Industries & Energy, and a former CEO of the Business Council of Australia. He said: “Just as we have faced fire, flood, drought and military threat in the past we now need to throw everything we can at the climate crisis. We must make action on global warming the nation’s highest-level priority.”

Mark Wakeham, CEO for Environment Victoria, is one of many supporters of the petition: “The climate emergency we’ve been talking about for 30 years is upon us. We really have entered the phase of now or never,” he said.

Kayaking to Canberra – the final leg

Steve Posselt will be kayaking 1,300 kilometres from his home in Ballina into Canberra to deliver the petition to Malcolm Turnbull in early 2017. His aim is to collect over 100,000 signatures from Australians who know that all-out emergency-speed action is not only possible, **but it is now too late for anything less to be effective.**

“I must be able to look my grandkids in the eye and say that once we knew the extent of the problem, we did everything we possibly could to address it.”

ENDS

For an *interview with Steve Posselt*, call tel: **0438 138 982**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- About Steve Posselt:
www.kayak4earth.com
www.climateemergencydeclaration.org/kayak
- About the petition and to access references, hi-res photos and resources:
www.climateemergencydeclaration.org/media
- The petition can be signed at
www.climateemergencydeclaration.org/sign

Kayak trip facts and figures

Steve Posselt started his climate change kayak trips 10 years ago, when he was 54, and went from Brisbane to Adelaide in the 2007 drought. That was 3,250 kilometres with 1,080 kilometres dragging the kayak.

The effort from Canberra to Paris was 5,000 kilometres with a few hundred kilometres dragging the kayak, and it included a trip up the Mississippi in a flood. “It seems like no-one else has ever paddled up the Lower Mississippi in a flood and maybe that says something about my intelligence,” commented Steve Posselt.

There are no records that anyone else has paddled from Canberra to Paris either. All up Steve’s ‘*Old Yella*’ kayak has done 11,000 kilometres – with 1,400 kilometres to go on the Ballina to Canberra leg.

On Saturday 25 February 2017, Steve Posselt will stop at Engineering House in Canberra where prominent speakers will discuss the climate emergency and climate solutions. He will then lead a march to Parliament House where he will hand over the Climate Emergency Declaration petition and address politicians.

More info on www.climateemergencydeclaration.org/kayak



Climate emergency facts and figures

Latest key facts on climate from the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO can be found in their biennial 'State of the Climate' report, which was published in October 2016. Among other things it states that:

- Australia has warmed by around 1°C since 1910.
- The number of days per year over 35°C has increased in recent decades, except in parts of northern Australia.
- There has been an increase in extreme fire weather, and a longer fire season, across large parts of Australia.
- April–October growing season rainfall has reduced by around 11 per cent since the mid-1990s in the continental southeast of Australia.
- The overwhelming contribution to the additional CO₂ in the atmosphere is from human activities, mainly the burning of fossil fuels.
- The atmospheric CO₂ increases in 2015 were the highest ever observed.

In August, The Climate Institute released research on the implications for Australia of the 1.5°C and 2°C warming, goals agreed in the bipartisan backed Paris Agreement. That research showed warming of 1.5°C would see current extreme heat waves, droughts and mass coral bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef becoming the new normal. At 2°C, our global climate system would move from the upper end of present day climate variability into uncharted territory, resulting in extreme, costly and dangerous impacts for Australia.

READ MORE:

» State of the Climate report:
www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate

» The Climate Institute report:
www.climateinstitute.org.au/verve/_resources/TCI_Beyond_the_Limits_FINAL23082016.pdf

» The UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2015:
www.uneplive.unep.org/media/docs/theme/13/EGR_2015_ES_English_Embargoed.pdf

» Carbon Brief:
Why Paris climate pledges need to overdeliver to keep warming to 2C
www.carbonbrief.org/guest-post-why-paris-climate-pledges-need-to-overdeliver-to-keep-warming-to-2c