

# Brunswick Uniting Church

## Climate Action Commitment

*As people of God living in a time  
Climate Crisis, we commit to act to  
reduce our carbon footprint by:*

- Having another go at composting  
(after being unsuccessful in the past)*
- Keeping trying to avoid using/  
receiving plastic bags, especially  
from the butcher*
- Walking and using public transport  
rather than a car*
- Turning on heating later*

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### Continuing Commitments

#### Garden

- Planting native indigenous plants.
- Growing vegetables.
- Using 100% tank water for garden.

#### Kitchen

- Eating Kangaroo and wallaby (and wild harvested feral animals) in place of beef and lamb.

#### Energy

- Using 100% carbon neutral energy through Powershop.
- Minimising car use, maximising walking and public transport,
- Using car sharing when needed.
- Using passive heating and cooling options.

#### Activism

- Giving financial support to environmental organisations - VNPA, Wilderness Society, Greenpeace, Friends of Merri Creek.
- Joining in public protests.

#### Waste

- Minimising disposable plastics and recycling all recyclables.
- Composting all food waste.

#### Finance

- Day to day banking moved to Bank Australia.
- Prioritising ethical options for all investments.

### New Commitments

#### Emissions Reduction

- Change habitual behaviour by taking shorter showers timed with watch timer.
- Investigate and apply most energy efficient heating options for individual rooms without built in heaters.

#### Green Energy

- Work towards moving to 100% renewable electricity through Powershop.

#### Activism

- Increase involvement with VNPA from financial (membership and donations to campaigns) and social (bushwalking groups) to get involved in campaigns. Start by attending AGM to get a fuller picture of their campaigns.

#### Investment

- Get financial advice to determine the most effective environmental ethical investment options for our savings.

**Ian Ferguson**

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- Continuing to work on our energy use. We have solar cells on our roof and have recently installed a tesla battery which is working well. We anticipate that this summer the electricity needs of our household will be met by solar power most days. We are planning to replace our existing hot water service with a far more efficient heat pump hws. There is a scheme which currently means this costs very little.
- We have a rainwater tank. We have a grey water system, collecting shower water which is reused to run the laundry washing machine and the toilet.
- I am learning more vegetarian recipes.
- Our food waste goes either into our home compost or the council green bin (Darebin). We refill our own containers with cleaning products from Ceres. We get landfill biodegradable rubbish bags from the enviroshop. We will continue to try to cut down on plastic packaging and tools. We recycle using the council system, redcycle and Terracycle.

**Annie Quail**

## Shawn Whelan

### 1. SHORT VERSION

I think it's great that we are challenging each other at BUC to make household commitments, as well as making practical changes at the church. Changing our individual consumer behaviour can be a healthy discipleship practice, even a spiritual discipline. This year, Natalie and I are making sure that our bank and our super are working for the climate, not against it.

At the same time, I'm mindful that consumer action alone **CANNOT SAVE OUR CLIMATE**. Our BUC Climate Crisis statement recognises that *only concerted effort by governments and business* can do that.

So this year, I may well think of ways to further reduce my personal carbon footprint. And I hope I'll do some of those things. But mostly, I want to challenge myself to redirect that good energy into fighting for the big picture changes we desperately need, without which our climate will change irreversibly. That means advocacy and action focused on governments and business.

### 2. LONG VERSION

Hi, I'm Shawn. For our household commitment this year, we had planned to move our money out of Westpac and into a bank with much better environmental policies. Fortunately, in May they released an improved policy on Climate Action. So we're now watching closely to see whether their actions line up with their words, and we've written to Westpac to tell them so (see letter attached). If you'd like more information, check out [MarketForces.org.au](http://MarketForces.org.au).

Speaking more generally...I think it's great that we are challenging each other at BUC to make household commitments, as well as making practical changes at the church. There are several good reasons for doing so.

I also want to remember that consumer action alone **CANNOT SAVE OUR CLIMATE**. Our BUC Climate Crisis statement recognises that *only concerted international effort by governments and business* can do that. This leads me to two suggestions.

One, that we take care not to beat ourselves up over every little improvement we might possibly be able to make. I do think that changing our individual consumer behaviour can be a healthy discipleship practice, even a spiritual discipline. But let's keep our perspective, and never let it become a source of guilt or self-flagellation.

Two, that we prioritise spending our time, energy and money on the big picture changes, without which our climate will change irreversibly. That means advocacy and action focused on governments and business.

So this year, I may well think of ways to further reduce my personal carbon footprint. And I hope I'll do some of those things. But mostly, I want to challenge myself to redirect that good energy into fighting for the big picture changes we desperately need.

3. APPENDIX – letter to Westpac  
(sent via MarketForces.org.au, adapted from their template)

To Westpac,

I'm writing, a little belatedly, to acknowledge the important step in the right direction Westpac has made by committing (in May this year) to reduce its exposure to thermal coal to zero by 2030.

Your continued commitment, on paper at least, to the Paris Agreement is also encouraging - if it is followed up with meaningful action.

A customer for life, I had early this year commenced the process of moving all of our family's accounts out of Westpac to a bank with much better environmental policies. Your May announcement led me to pause this process, keeping some accounts open while we wait to see what happens next.

I will be closely watching your lending to fossil fuels, and will have no hesitation in publicly leaving the bank if Westpac drifts from the requirements outlined in the Paris climate agreement. I note that, in order to keep warming below 1.5 degrees, energy from gas must fall by 25% by 2030 and oil by 37% from a 2010 baseline (according to the IPCC). This means Westpac cannot lend to projects and companies that are expanding the fossil fuel industry and remain Paris-aligned.

I was disappointed to learn that since committing to the Paris climate goals, Westpac has loaned \$5.4 billion to coal oil and gas projects, including \$846 million to projects that expand the scale of the industry. You have loaned 2.7 times more money to fossil fuels than renewable energy over that same time frame. This current lending practice is totally out of line with the Paris Agreement. I expect you to change these lending practices, and stop lending to projects that expand the fossil fuel industry.

Westpac must also address its corporate lending, in addition to specific project lending. Lending to companies whose business models rely on the failure of the Paris Agreement should be ruled out. Any such lending undermines both your own policy and your Paris climate pledge.

I am one of many customers who have been watching your lending practices closely. I will continue to do so until Westpac demonstrates lending that aligns with your pledge to uphold the Paris Climate goals.

Sincerely,

Shawn

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reduce our carbon footprint by:*

1. Replacing our gas heating with electric, powered by renewable energy
2. Continue to lobby against fossil fuels
3. Reduce our consumption of meat and imported food
4. Increase our use of organic food.
5. Investigate an electric car.
6. Turn off appliances when not in use (incl. lights, computer)

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- Advocacy of political and business leaders through ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change), including NVDA within COVID limits
- Divestment via choosing sustainable investment options in our superannuation and advocating for our superfunds to divest from all fossil-fuel related investments
- Installing solar panels on roof of house for electricity generation by December 2021
- Replacing petrol car with electric by December 2021
- Inclusion of Indigenous bush food in diet
- Using Public Transport, walking, and biking whenever possible, minimising use of a car
- Water and energy saving measures (shorter showers, infrequent car cleaning, cold water washing)
- Asking restaurant /café premises frequented about their food and other waste strategies
- Eating smaller and higher-quality portions of red meat

*Linda and Jamie*

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### Cameron family

*As people of God living in a time  
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reduce our carbon footprint by:*

*The purchase of our next vehicle which will be a hybrid, fuel consumption will drop from 11 litres per 100km to less than 5 litres per 100km - so says the literature. We are excited!!*

*Encouraging people to vote in local elections for candidates who have a stated commitment to climate action*

*Buying Christmas gifts that have a minimal environmental impact by either being experience based or have limited packaging*



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Tim Hoffman

*As people of God living in a time  
Climate Crisis, we commit to act to  
reduce our carbon footprint by:*

1. Changing my electricity supplier to Powershop
2. Not buying beef at the supermarket

Tim & Meredith Budge

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reduce our carbon footprint by:*

- \* Influence family & friends
- \* Bought electric car -  
now a social enterprise  
in the share economy
- \* Soon to own 90 acres  
of bushland with an  
everlasting conservation  
covenant on it.
- \* Join more campaign  
more \* focus charity efforts  
\* on the environment
- \* Influence work mates
- \* Develop climate projects in Pacific