

Australians rally for climate, including at G20 talks

September 21 2014



Protesters listen to a speech by an environmental activist (R) outside the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting in Cairns, on September 21, 2014

Australians rallied for climate action on Sunday, from protesters chanting "Green energy" outside G20 talks to forming a human chain message in Sydney as part of an international day of action.

The protests are part of a global call to arms to fight climate change ahead of a United Nations summit in New York on Tuesday, which

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott will miss to attend parliament in Canberra.

"The message that we wanted to send clearly is that we are really disappointed our [prime minister](#) is not showing up to the emergency climate change meeting," said Sydney protester Ella Weisbrot.

By skipping the high-powered talks Abbott was choosing to "back the dying fossil fuel industry over our future", the Australian Youth Climate Coalition spokeswoman told AFP.

Hundreds attended the protest in an inner-city park in which they stood in a formation which spelled out "Beyond coal and gas", Weisbrot said.

In the northern city of Cairns, more than 100 people wearing green paper hearts around their necks gathered in a colourful demonstration amid tight security outside the G20 finance ministers talks.

They repeatedly chanted "Every dollar spent, every single cent, 100 percent, [green energy](#)" and carried banners including one that read: "Add climate change to the G20."

Geoff Holland, a Cairns community activist who addressed the crowd near a row of armed police officers, said he was unhappy that Abbott would not be among the 125 heads of state and government at the UN summit.

Australia will be represented at the meeting by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

"None of the G20 countries are taking responsibility. They are still representing the interests of extremely powerful fossil fuel corporations," Holland said.

Speaking at a rally attended by several thousand in Melbourne, Greens leader Christine Milne said small Pacific states were already suffering from the effects of a warming planet and rising sea levels.

"They are living the impact of [climate change](#) right now. And that's why the absolute message of today is action not words," she said.

Australia has pledged to reduce emissions by five percent by 2020 from 2000 levels, but has since scrapped a key tool, the world's biggest carbon tax.

The protests were among the first of many expected to take place on Sunday around the world ahead of the UN summit.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is expected to join the a demonstration in Manhattan, at which an estimated 100,000 people are expected to attend.

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