

# From Australia to Europe, climate protesters hit the streets

September 20 2019, by Rod McGuirk and Frank Jordans



A large inflatable globe is bounced through the crowd as thousands of protestors, many of them school students, gather in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, calling for action to guard against climate change. Australia's acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack has described ongoing climate rallies as "just a disruption" that should have been held on a weekend to avoid inconveniencing communities. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

Hundreds of thousands of protesters in Australia, many of them children who skipped school, kicked off a day of demonstrations around the world against climate change in the run-up to a U.N. summit in New York.

Rallies to open the "Global Climate Strike" took place on Friday in 110 towns and cities across Australia, including Sydney and the national capital, Canberra. Demonstrators called for their country, the world's largest exporter of coal and liquid [natural gas](#), to take more drastic action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Even though we ourselves aren't sick, the planet which we live on is, and we are protesting and fighting for it," said Siobhan Sutton, a 15-year-old student at Perth Modern School.

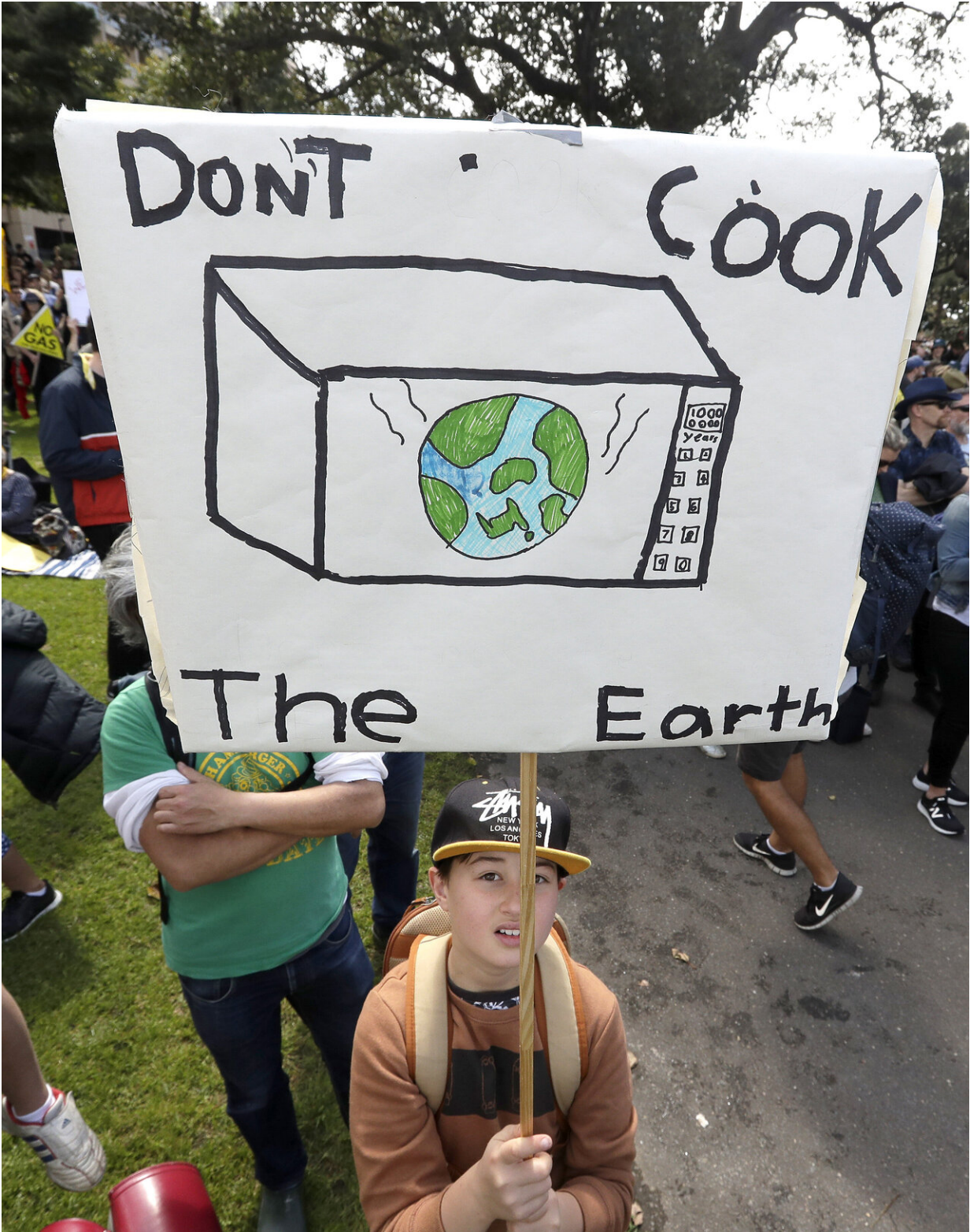
Organizers estimate more than 300,000 protesters took to Australian streets in what would be the country's biggest demonstration since the Iraq War in 2003.

Smaller protests took place in Asia, from the Philippines to Hong Kong and India.

"We need to reclaim our constitutional right to clean air and water," said Aman Sharma, a 16-year-old protester in India's capital New Delhi.

Rallies were also planned in Europe, Africa and the United States, where organizers say more than 800 events are expected Friday.

In Germany, which has seen large-scale climate rallies for over a year, police said 17,000 people had gathered in the southwestern city of Freiburg, one of 500 cities across the country where protests were planned.



A young activist holds up a handmade placard as thousands of protestors, many of them school students, gather in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, calling for action to guard against climate change. Australia's acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack has described ongoing climate rallies as "just a disruption" that should have been held on a weekend to avoid inconveniencing communities. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

In the capital Berlin and Germany's financial hub of Frankfurt some protesters staged brief road blockades to highlight their demands for a drastic reduction in the country's greenhouse gas emissions, to which transport is a major contributor.

Under pressure from sustained protests over the past months, the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel is planning to announce a package of measures to reduce Germany's [greenhouse gas emissions](#) later Friday.

Rallies were also held in Kenya's capital Nairobi, Johannesburg and the South African capital, Pretoria.

Experts say Africa is the most vulnerable continent to climate change and the least equipped to deal with it. Governments have pleaded for more support from the [international community](#).

The protests are partly inspired by the activism of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who has staged weekly demonstrations under the heading "Fridays for Future" over the past year, calling on world leaders to step up their efforts against [climate change](#). Thunberg is expected to speak at the U.N. Climate Action Summit on Monday.



Thousands of protestors, many of them school students, gather in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, calling for action to guard against climate change. Australia's acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack has described ongoing climate rallies as "just a disruption" that should have been held on a weekend to avoid inconveniencing communities. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)

Australian universities have said they will not penalize students for attending Friday's rallies, while Australian schools vary on what action, if any, they take against children who skip classes to attend demonstrations.

Perth student Sutton said she would fail a math exam by attending a protest in the west coast city of Perth.

"I have basically been told that because it is not a valid reason to be missing school—it is not a medical reason or anything—I am going to get a zero on the test if I don't actually sit it," she said.

She said her math teacher had given her the option to sit the exam before Friday, but she was unable to do so because of her commitments as one of the protest organizers.

Acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack said students should be in school.

"These sorts of rallies should be held on a weekend where it doesn't actually disrupt business, it doesn't disrupt schools, it doesn't disrupt universities," McCormack told reporters in Melbourne.



Protesters with placards participate in the Global Strike 4 Climate rally in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019. Thousands of protesters are gathering at rallies around Australia as a day of worldwide demonstrations begins ahead of a U.N. climate summit in New York. (Steven Saphore/AAP Images via AP)



Mounted police block a path as thousands of protesters, many of them school students, attempt to march on the streets in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, calling for action to guard against climate change. Australia's acting prime minister Michael McCormack has described ongoing climate rallies as "just a disruption" that should have been held on a weekend to avoid inconveniencing communities. (AP Photo/Rick Rycroft)



Thousands of protestors, many of them school students, gather in Sydney, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, calling for action to guard against climate change. Australia's acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack has described ongoing climate rallies as "just a disruption" that should have been held on a weekend to avoid inconveniencing communities. (AP Photo/Tiger Balsmeyer)





Environmental activists hold placards during a rally outside the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to coincide with the global protests on climate change Friday, Sept. 20, 2019 at suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila, Philippines. Various environmental groups in the country are participating in what is expected to be the world's largest mobilization on climate change known as "Global Climate Strikes." (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



An environmental activist holds a placard during a rally outside the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to coincide with the global protests on climate change Friday, Sept. 20, 2019 at suburban Quezon city, northeast of Manila, Philippines. Various environmental groups in the country are participating in what is expected to be the world's largest mobilization on climate change known as "Global Climate Strike." (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



Environmental activists, mostly students, display their message in front of "a human globe" formation to coincide with the global protests on climate change Friday, Sept. 20, 2019, at the University of Philippines campus in suburban Quezon city northeast of Manila, Philippines. Various environmental groups in the country are participating in what is expected to be the world's largest mobilization on climate change known as "Global Climate Strikes." (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)



People participate in the Global Strike 4 Climate rally in Hong Kong, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019. A day of worldwide demonstrations calling for action to guard against climate change began ahead a U.N. summit in New York. (AP Photo/Vincent Yu)



A girl holds a sign during a protest at the Old Town Square in Prague, Czech Republic, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019. Several hundreds of protestors gathered in response to a day of worldwide demonstrations calling for action to guard against climate change. (AP Photo/Petr David Josek)



A girl wearing a polar bear costume joins a protest at the Old Town Square in Prague, Czech Republic, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019. Several hundreds of protestors gathered in response to a day of worldwide demonstrations calling for action to guard against climate change. (AP Photo/Petr David Jousek)



Protesters with placards participate in the Global Strike 4 Climate rally in Hong Kong, Friday, Sept. 20, 2019. Protesters are gathering as a day of worldwide demonstrations begins ahead of a U.N. climate summit in New York. (AP Photo/Vincent Yu)



In this Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019 photo a giant poster showing German Chacellor Angela Merkel, right, and the chairwomen of the German Christian Democratic Party (CDU), Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, left, is displayed in front of the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany. The German government is scrambling to agree a package of measures for tackling global warming, as protesters prepare to stage rallies across the country demanding decisive action against climate change. (Kay Nietfeld/dpa via AP)

"I think it is just a disruption," he added.

Some companies are encouraging their employees to join the climate strike.

Australian Council of Trade Unions, which represents labor unions, said



it supported employees taking time off work to protest.

The council said in a statement that it "must take a stand for our future when our government will not."

© 2019 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: From Australia to Europe, climate protesters hit the streets (2019, September 20)  
retrieved 26 April 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2019-09-australia-europe-climate-protesters-streets.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.