

Thousands rally in Australia for climate action

17 November 2013



Firefighters battle a bushfire near Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains on October 24, 2013

Thousands of people on Sunday rallied across Australia calling for stronger action on climate change, days after new conservative Prime Minister Tony Abbott moved to abolish a carbon tax.

Activist group GetUp, which organised the National Day of Climate Action, estimated that more than 60,000 people turned out at protests.

"From remote country towns to the big cities, Australians have come to their own conclusions after our hottest year on record. And they want action," GetUp national director Sam Mclean told reporters.

Australia has just experienced the hottest 12 months ever recorded, which coupled with massive bushfires in New South Wales state last month has inflamed debate about whether there is a link to [climate change](#).

The rallies also followed Abbott last week introducing a bill into parliament to repeal a [carbon](#)

[tax](#) designed to combat [climate](#) change as his first major economic reform since taking office.

Abbott said the September 7 election which he won decisively had been a referendum on the future of the tax which was imposed by the former Labor government on major polluters from 2012 in a bid to reduce carbon emissions.

He instead favours a "direct action" plan that includes an incentive fund to pay companies to increase their energy efficiency, a controversial sequestration of carbon in soil scheme, and the planting of 20 million trees.



Image taken on November 8, 2013 shows the Sydney Harbour under a thin layer of smoke due to bushfires and back burning

But the Climate Action Tracker, an independent monitor of countries' carbon pledges and actions, claims it will increase Australia's emissions by 12 percent in 2020 instead of reducing them by five percent from 2000 levels as per its own target.

Deputy Labor leader Tanya Plibersek told a rally in Sydney that the government needed to get back to

basics on climate change.

"Australia is going backwards, the rest of the world is going forwards accepting that climate change is real and accepting that we must act," she told some 10,000 protesters who braved driving rain, holding placards reading "One Climate. Our Future," and "Hands off Carbon Tax Abbott."

"Australia can't go backwards in the face of global action. Is climate change real? Yes. Was climate action working? Yes."

Australia is among the world's worst per capita polluters due to its reliance on coal-fired power and mining exports.

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