



Newsletter February 2026

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1. Welcome

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2026. It has been a rocky start to the year, with **climate catastrophes** erupting from widespread locations in the state, including both floods **and** fires in the Otways! As NCAT President Mitzi Tuke recently commented, this is what **climate instability** looks like. In her email to **Kate Thwaites, MP for Jagajaga**, she raises concerns that the link between severe weather events, climate harm and the burning of fossil fuels is not well enough understood in the community. This community unpreparedness is a **failure of our government to engage fully in a frank climate change narrative**, as well as a **failure of government to be strongly committed to addressing climate change directly**, i.e., winding back fossil fuels, stopping fossil fuel subsidies, and saying 'no' to new fossil fuel projects. To read Mitzi's full letter to Kate Thwaites, click [here](#).

The roots of this government inaction, even in a 'democratic' society such as ours, are strongly connected to **capture by powerful vested interests**, and lie deep within our past and present societal pull towards **hierarchical organising structures**, labelled by Luke Kemp in his book 'The Goliath Curse: the history and future of societal collapse' as **Goliaths**. A Goliath is a collection of dominance hierarchies organised primarily through authority and violence. Societies organised in such a way **inevitably lead to collapse** - but there are different models of societal organisation that have been used in the past and are

still being used. He points to glimmers of hope in this otherwise sobering analysis by describing ways of organising society that break down power imbalances and inequalities. One powerful way of doing this is to give communities a voice through **deliberative decision-making processes and inclusive institutions**, including citizens' assemblies.

For more on this see the review of Luke Kemp's book in section 5.

And let's not forget the power of imagination. **Michelle Maloney** from **Australian Earth Laws Alliance** envisages a world in 2040 that is safe, secure, and biodiverse, nature-based, citizen-led, and bio-regionally governed. Listen to her vision in the podcast in section 6.

Good things are also happening in the renewable energy space. The **uptake of home battery installation** has surpassed all expectations, with flow-on effects for the energy grid. See section 3 for more.

NCAT is planning a great line-up of speakers for this year's **Climate Cafe program**, ranging from environmental topics such as 'Is a River Alive?' and 'Nurturing Local Biodiversity' to psychology 'How to talk to kids about climate change', housing 'Innovative Housing and the Brougham St Housing Co-op', and many more. See Climate Cafe section below.

We will be continuing our work on **community-led adaptation and resilience-building**, in collaboration with the Friends of the Earth Act on Climate team. Look out for upcoming actions in the adaptation space in future newsletters.

Rapid Response Actions protesting against no new coal and gas will also continue this year outside MP Kate Thwaites' office in Heidelberg, and in other locations. Check newsletters for upcoming actions.

We look forward to seeing you at some of our events in the coming year.

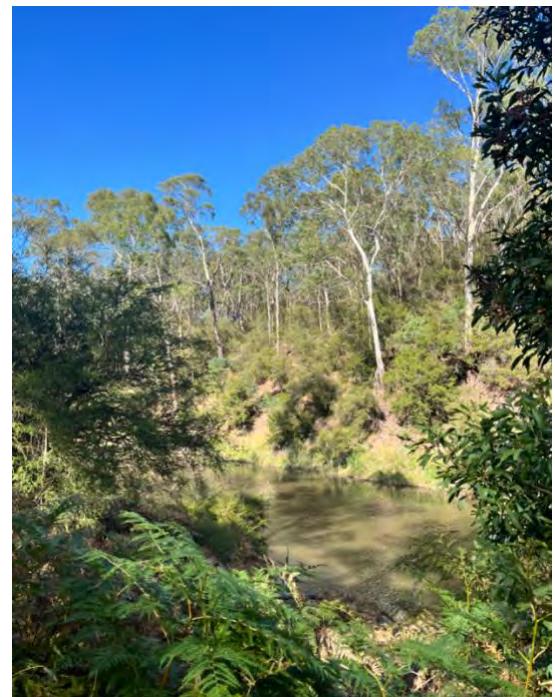
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2. Climate Cafe 2026

We are excited to be bringing you another year of engaging and informative speakers at **Platform 3095**, on the **last Thursday of every month**, February to November.

Our first speaker for the year, on Thursday 26 February, will be **Emma Barnett** from the **Yarra Riverkeeper Association**.

In her presentation, **Is a River Alive?** Emma will take us on a journey along the Birrarung's past, present, and future. She'll talk about what it means to see the Birrarung not just as a waterway, but as a living presence in our community, and how our relationship with it has shifted over time. You'll also hear about what the Yarra Riverkeepers are doing to speak up for the river: caring for its ecosystems, teaching people about its significance, and helping others understand the simple actions they can take to protect this remarkable part of our landscape.



If you're curious about the river you've walked beside, picnicked by, or simply appreciated, this session offers a warm invitation to deepen that connection—and learn how we can all help the Birrarung thrive.

The program for the **first half of 2026** is as follows:

February 26 **Is a River Alive?**
Emma Barnett, Yarra Riverkeeper Association

March 26 **Talking to Kids about Climate Change**
Dr Aimee Maxwell, Psychologist

April 30 **Nurturing Local Biodiversity / Caring for Country**
Jill Kellow, Friends of Moor-rul Grasslands,
and Vicky Shukuroglou, Friends of Biodiversity: Hohnes Hill

May 28 **Innovative Housing**
Teresa Dominik, Brougham St Co-housing Development

June 25 **Environmental Sociology**
Assoc Prof Rachel Busbridge (ACU)

Looking forward to seeing you in 2026!

Where: Platform 3095 Cafe, 965 Main Rd, Eltham

When: 7:30pm last Thursday of the month February to November

As always, you are welcome to join us earlier for a meal from 6pm onwards, or just come at 7.30pm for the speaker.

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3. Battery success stories

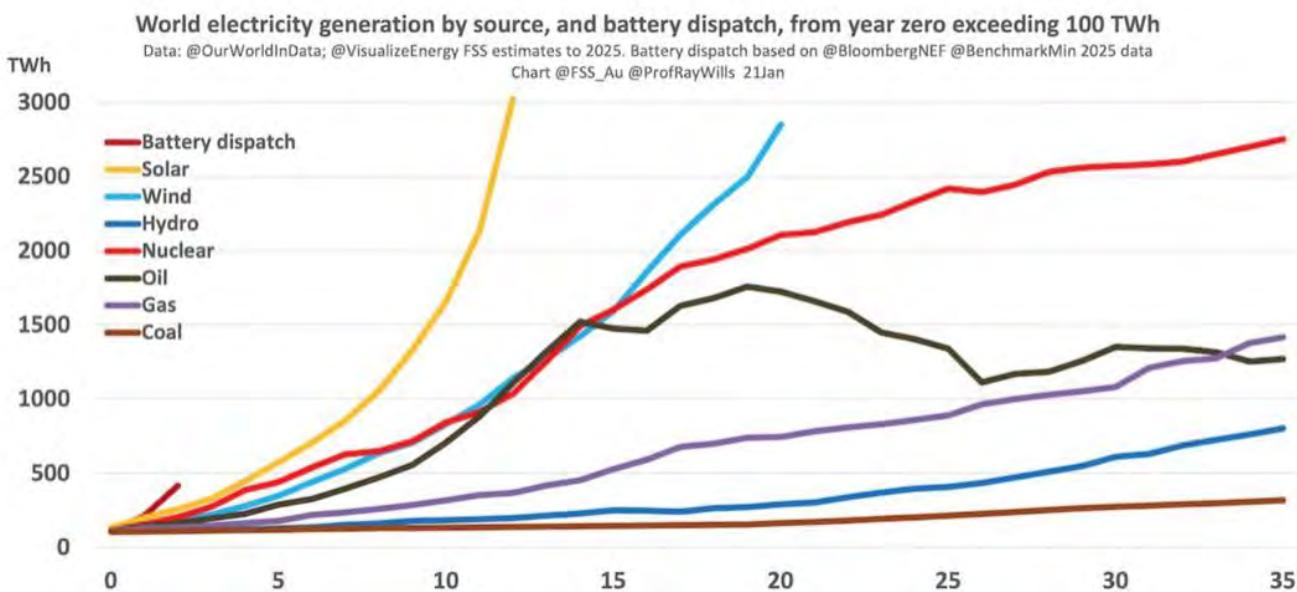


Image: [Renew Economy](#)

Batteries are looking set to beat solar as the **fastest energy transition in human history**. In a [Renew Economy](#) article recently, a graph showed the speed of the stunning rollout of battery storage across the world. For the full article, click [here](#).

In Australia, this has been given a huge boost with the federal government's recent home battery installation program. David Hollis posted this on FB recently:

"According to the latest from Renew Economy, in just one single financial year (2025-26), Australian households are on track to install home batteries with roughly **the same storage scale and power output as the entire legendary Snowy Hydro scheme**. We're talking around 11,500 MWh of storage capacity and around 3,800 MW of dispatchable power - basically matching Snowy's daily average output - all from thousands of batteries quietly humming away in garages, under stairs, and next to the laundry from Perth to Brisbane." For the full post, click [here](#).

See also [this article](#) on the plunge in prices as renewables supply half of the grid, batteries surge, and coal hits new low.

4. Offshore wind turbines create all-you-can-eat havens where fish can double in size



Image: [Renew Economy](#)

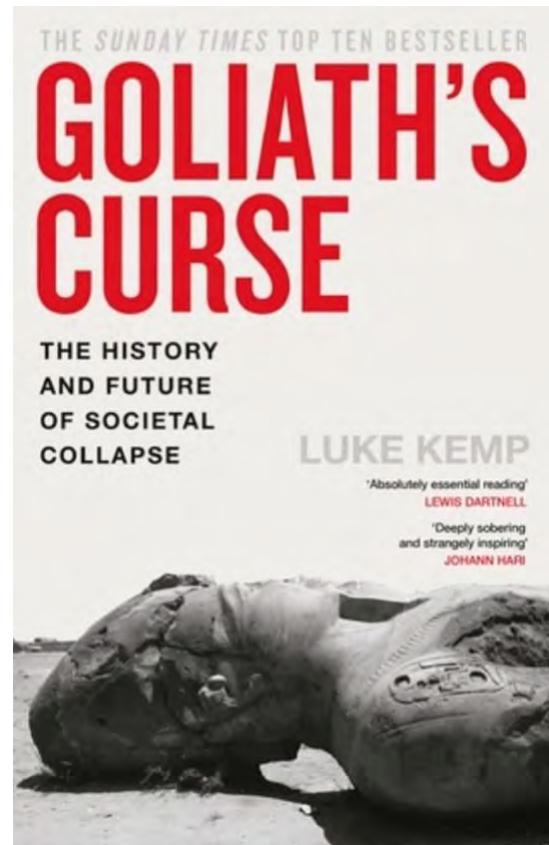
In another good news story, a recent study has found surprising benefits for some species of fish from offshore wind turbines.

In these protected environments, not only do the rough surfaces of turbine monopiles and submarine cables provide new habitats for sponges, corals, anemones, and other sessile organisms, but the extra food source allows other creatures to thrive as well. For the full story, click [here](#)

5. Is Societal Collapse Inevitable?

In his book **Goliath's Curse: the history and future of societal collapse**, Luke Kemp has studied the **rise and collapse of innumerable societies** over the millennia of human history and analysed the factors that led to their collapse. Time and again, he found that the societies which adopted dominance hierarchies that controlled people and energy through authority and violence suffered collapse. He called these societies **Goliaths**.

He paints a compelling picture to support the contention that **our current global societal system is also heading for collapse**. Growth obsessed, extractive institutions like the fossil fuel industry, big tech and military-industrial complexes rule our world and produce new ways of annihilating our species, from climate change to nuclear war. Wealth inequality is increasing, and democratic governance is under serious threat from autocracies and despots. Our systems are now so fast, complex, and interconnected that a future collapse will likely be **global, swift, and irreversible**.



Avoiding this endgame will require deep-rooted and systemic changes. **We need to build a better world through a redistribution of power**. Kemp states, 'We must use technology to help us run open democracy at scale (with widespread use of deliberative assemblies and juries) and keep inequality in check.' He cites studies which have found that **democratic societies significantly outperform autocracies in making the best long-term policies**. That means inclusive institutions and more involvement of regular citizens in governance. If citizens had a say, I doubt that they would agree to support the extractive practices of the wealthy few that are rapidly leading us to chaos and catastrophe. If we can heed the warnings, we may yet escape the doom of former Goliaths.

Click [here](#) for a Late Night Live interview with Luke Kemp, and [here](#) for a review in the Conversation.

6. Podcast: Imagining 2040 - Pathways to a flourishing future



Image: <https://www.hopeaustralia.org.au/>

Imagine a future where "a developer presents a pitch to a local citizens' assembly and has to explain how their project is good for Country and good for people. Ordinary citizens could say 'You know what? **That doesn't sound like it's going to add to the ecological health of our bioregion.** Go away.' It wouldn't be that these guys are in the position of power. It would be that local people and communities, **fully informed and empowered by their ecological benchmarks**, could say no; clearing that forest, putting stand-alone houses with no backyards, 5m away from each other, and no capacity for replenishing biodiversity and no capacity for families to even afford these houses is not the kind of development we want in our place. **We need to rethink it and do it more creatively.**"

This is **Michelle Maloney**, convenor of [Australian Earth Laws Alliance \(AELA\)](#) talking about her vision for a thriving future.

Click [here](#) to hear her full presentation, presented as part of a podcast series from [Householders' Options to Protect the Environment HOPE inc.](#)

7. When cities burn: Could the Los Angeles bushfires happen here?



WHEN CITIES BURN: Could the Los Angeles Fires Happen Here?

As climate change drives **hotter, drier, and more dangerous fire conditions**, some of Australia's most experienced firefighters and emergency leaders are warning that our cities and suburbs face new and growing fire risks.

With devastating fires currently affecting communities across parts of Australia, many people are asking how fire risk is changing – **and what this means for our cities and suburbs**.

Watch the [Climate Council's](#) recent webinar, ***When Cities Burn: Could the Los Angeles Fires Happen Here?*** where speakers **Greg Mullins** AO, AFSM, former Commissioner of Fire & Rescue NSW, and **Major General Peter Dunn** AO (Ret), former Commissioner of the ACT Emergency Services Authority, discuss:

- What the LA fires reveal about Australia's growing risk of urban bushfires
- How climate change is supercharging fire weather and overwhelming traditional firefighting approaches
- What this means for Australian cities, suburbs, and communities
- What our governments must do now to reduce risk
- How communities can play a meaningful role in pushing for a safer future.

Click [here](#) to listen to a recording of the webinar.

Click [here](#) for the Climate Council's report.

Here are some suggestions from the Climate Council for meaningful action.

1. [Email your local MP about climate-fuelled bushfire risk](#)

Decisions made in Parliament this year will influence how severe future fire seasons become. The Climate Council have made it easy to contact your federal MP to share the '[When Cities Burn](#)' report with them, and highlight your concern about **rising climate-driven bushfire risk**. It asks them to support **strong national action to cut climate pollution**. It also urges them to work with state decision-makers to invest in disaster preparedness, and community resilience.

2. [Use our conversation guide to talk with your community](#)

Many Australians are worried about bushfires and climate change – and many are also unsure how to talk about it. Our [new conversation guide](#) helps you sensitively explain **the link between climate change and bushfire risk**, and debunk common misinformation.

8. How the Atlas Network is shaping your life, even if you've never heard of it

Remember the **Atlas Network**? Quietly spreading disinformation about climate science, eroding our democracy, and profiting hugely from fossil fuel interests. This long article traces the history of the Atlas Network, its theoretical and economic underpinnings within the framework of neoliberalism, and the rise of global right-wing think tanks from their origins in the 1950s to the present day.

The organisation [Advance](#), while not a think tank, has strong links to the Atlas Network. Advance campaigned aggressively against the [Voice to Parliament](#) in 2023, and it is now campaigning to stop welcome to country ceremonies and ban Indigenous flags being flown on government buildings. It has railed against pro-Palestine protests in Australia, and it has been campaigning to dump net zero.

The role of these shadowy institutions in undermining political integrity is currently being investigated by the Senate committee on information integrity on climate change and energy:

"The United Nations has warned that 'coordinated disinformation campaigns' have been hindering global progress on climate change.

It launched a "[global initiative for information integrity on climate change](#)" to investigate and expose the campaigns that are deliberately eroding public trust in climate science and delaying and derailing climate action globally.

That's why Australia's Senate appointed a select committee in July last year to inquire into the issue in Australia.

The inquiry has held [public hearings](#) in Canberra, Sydney and Melbourne. It received more than 200 submissions.

Its [terms of reference](#) asked it to inquire into, among other things:

- (a) How misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated;
- (b) The origins, growth and prevalence of 'astroturfing' and its impact on public policy and debate;
- (c) Connections between **Australian organisations and international think tank and influence networks** associated with the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation related to matters of public policy; and
- (d) The **role of social media**, including the coordinated use of bots and trolls, messaging apps and generative artificial intelligence in facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation."

To read the full article, click [here](#).

9. Poll: What should we name this summer's heatwaves?

What should we name this summer's heatwaves?

Pick your top three.* X Clear choices

<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave AGL	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave EnergyAustralia
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Origin Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Chevron
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Woodside	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Rio Tinto
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave BHP	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Glencore
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Santos	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Inpex
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave North West Shelf	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Gorgon
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Scarborough	<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Browse
<input type="checkbox"/> Heatwave Beetaloo	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above

Here's a great idea from Monique Ryan's office! **Name the next heatwave** after your favourite **mega-polluting fossil fuel giant!** Santos, Rio Tinto, Woodside? Pick your top 3...

Enter the poll [here](#).

10. FB reel: Fossil fuel executives make millions, while volunteer firefighters put their lives on the line for \$0 to clean up climate disasters

During the **2019-2020 Black Summer bushfires**, volunteer firefighters were crucial, making up **78-80% of the emergency services personnel**. And this is most probably the same case in 2026.

Meanwhile, in 2024, **CEOs of companies fuelling those bushfires earned:**

Rio Tinto: \$9.2 million

Santos: \$8.4 million

Woodside: \$7.45 million

Whitehaven: \$6.6 million.

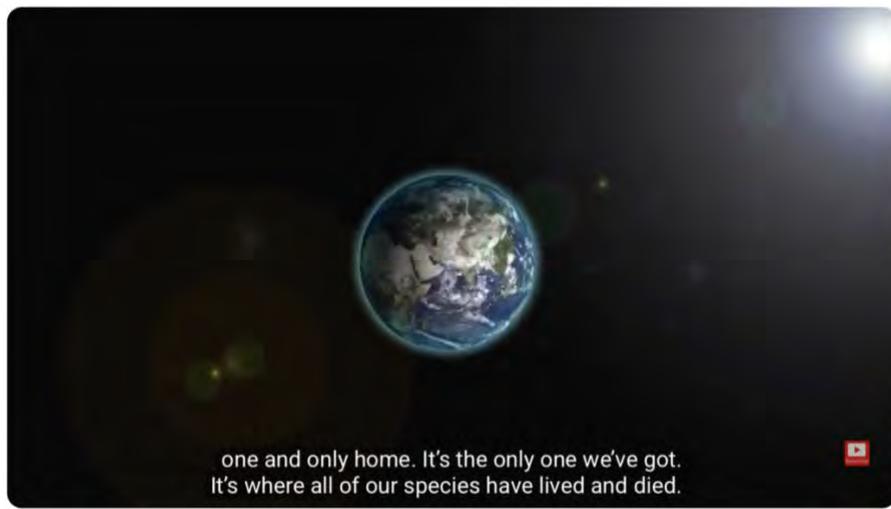
Click [here](#) to view the reel.

11. Quote of the Month

"Fossil fuels now represent a **systemic security liability**, driving instability abroad while accelerating climate breakdown at home.

- Admiral Chris Barrie, former chief of the Australian Defence Force (Retired)

12. Just Have a Think podcast: This is not the video I had planned to make



This compelling video of excerpts from the **National Emergency Briefing** in the UK in November 2025 sets out the climate risks we are facing now and in years to come. Although the focus is the UK, this is a global issue that affects the lives of all who live on Earth.

To watch the video, click [here](#).

13. NCAT membership

We warmly invite you to become a **member of Nillumbik Climate Action Team**. Members and supporters participate in and help with various events, activities, and public actions according to ability and interest. If you would like to become more actively involved there is also the possibility of joining our monthly planning meetings. **NCAT Membership is free**. If you wish to become a member, please fill in the [membership form](#) and return to info@nillumbikclimateactionteam.org.

14. Upcoming Events

REthink Nillumbik 2026 program

The **REthink Nillumbik Program** is a series of fun, interactive workshops designed to create a more sustainable and liveable Nillumbik. Sessions include a range of activities to help local residents reimagine our collective approach to energy and waste.

REthink events are collaborative, hands-on, and can help people take small actions that can lead to serious, positive change. They include practical demonstrations, creative activities, and simple ideas for rethinking everyday choices and behaviours.

Click [here](#) for more information about upcoming REthink Nillumbik events for 2026.

GO ELECTRIC!

FREE info about electrification and home efficiency

PRESENTED BY Going Green Solutions
FUNDED BY Nillumbik Shire Council
SUPPORTED BY Edendale Farm

 [Info & bookings](#)

Electrification 101: Making the switch
Eltham Library: 19 February, 6.30 to 8pm
Essential information on why going all-electric is a smart move and how to best go about it in your home.


Electrification 102: Ask an expert
DC Living & Learning: 21 February, 2 to 4pm
Get advice from an installer on solar panels, batteries, EV chargers, reverse cycle systems, heat pump hot water, and induction cooktops.


Window thermal efficiency
DV Library: 17 March, 7 to 8pm
Explore different ways to boost the thermal efficiency of your windows on any budget.


Solar and batteries for small business
DC Living & Learning: 24 March, 9.30 to 11.30am
Hear if solar and batteries are a good fit for your business. Suited to home-based, freehold and leasehold businesses.


Draught proofing your home
Eltham Library: 23 April, 7 to 8pm
Simple techniques to identify and prevent draughts for a warmer, more comfortable home.


DIY window upgrades
DV Library: 7 May, 6.30 to 8.30pm
A hands-on workshop teaching how to make removable DIY panels for your windows, to boost their thermal efficiency.



Webinar: Home Batteries and Solar - All you need to know. Wednesday 4 February, 7.30-9pm

HOME BATTERIES & SOLAR
**ALL YOU NEED
TO KNOW**

Trent Jones
CEO, All-Electric Homes

Russell Williams
Systems Engineer, Electrify Boroondara

Wed, Feb 4th 7.30 - 9.00pm
ONLINE

- Maximising savings
- Sizing, features
- Battery rebate

Home batteries can provide households with energy bill savings and energy security. And today, the **Cheaper Home Battery rebate** makes a home battery more affordable.

Russell Williams from our energy transition group was an early adopter of a home battery. Together with expert solar and home battery installer **Trent Jones** from **All Electric Homes**, he will give you the information you need to feel confident with installing a home battery.

Click [here](#) to register.

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Extreme Heat Awareness webinar, Wednesday 4 February, 2pm

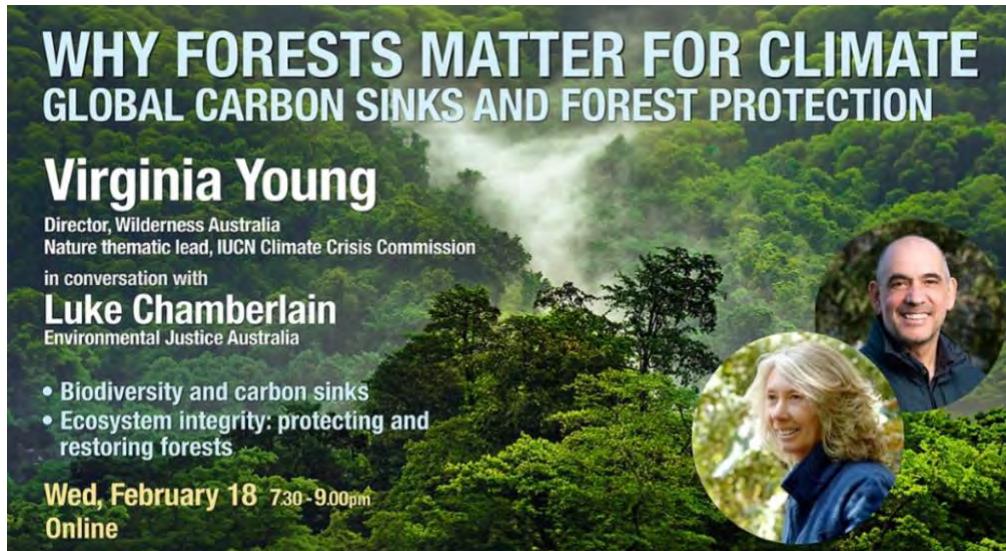
This webinar is for anyone interested in learning about the **health crisis of rising temperatures** and how we can all work together to keep ourselves safe and advocate for solutions. Whether you've come to our events in the past, or are new to our work, we'd love to see you there.

Extreme heat is the deadliest environmental disaster in Australia. It is one of the most urgent challenges communities all across the country are facing. As temperatures rise, and more people are at risk, it's important that we come together to learn about who is most at risk, and the solutions that we can take back to our local communities to keep each other safe and raise awareness. Presented by [Sweltering Cities](#).

Click [here](#) to register for this event

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Webinar: Why Forests Matter for Climate, Wednesday 18 February, 7.30-9pm



Join **Lighter Footprints** to hear ecosystems expert **Virginia Young** talk about the **importance of biodiversity and forest integrity to emissions reduction and climate action**. The economic values of primary tropical forests are globally significant. Avoiding their loss and degradation is critical to meeting global climate, biodiversity, and social development goals.

Virginia is a Director for Wilderness Australia, and has been involved with large scale ecosystem regeneration, particularly in Australia's southwest.

She works with global science leaders to communicate the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity for carbon retention, climate mitigation and adaptation to encourage synergistic climate and biodiversity action.

Luke Chamberlain from **Environmental Justice Australia** has decades of experience in fighting for the protection of native forests in Australia and internationally.

Click [here](#) to register.

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Energy and Sustainable Living Advice

Nillumbik Council offers a personalised advisory service for Nillumbik residents and businesses, on how to navigate the confusing world of energy and sustainable living.

Click [here](#) for more information.

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Repair Cafes in Nillumbik

Get your household items repaired for free by a team of volunteers. The aim is to help you fix things, learn new skills, and keep waste out of landfill.

Edendale repair cafe is held at Edendale Farm on the third Saturday of every month. **For more information click [here](#).**

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Support us

[Nillumbik Climate Action Team \(NCAT\)](#) is a small volunteer organisation. We rely on donations to support our work. **Thank you** to everyone who has donated to date. We couldn't do it without you!

If you are able to [support us](#), even in a small way, we'd be very grateful.

[DONATE](#)



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the Traditional Owners of Nillumbik and its environs, and that this land was never ceded. We thank them for their custodianship of the land over millennia.

We acknowledge that we are in a climate emergency; there can be no climate justice without First Nations justice.

We support First Nations peoples in their striving for complete recognition, truth-telling, treaty and justice, and we are sorry for the hurt and injustice we have caused.

nillumbikclimateactionteam.org