



Future Generations Day, UTS

12 March 2025

The Hon Matt Kean

Chair – Climate Change Authority

Check against delivery

First let me acknowledge the traditional owners of this land we're meeting on today, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation.

I pay my respects to their emerging leaders who will proudly walk in the footsteps of elders, past and present.

I'm Matt Kean, Chair of the national Climate Change Authority – and possibly the oldest person in this hall.

I've been a passionate champion of young people's involvement in policy and politics, going right back to my own time in student politics at this fine university.

In my previous role as a politician – I'm still on the mend – I got to meet so many active young people in my electorate and across this state and beyond.

I'm always inspired and energised to come to grassroots events like this.

One of my first political activities was a fight to protect the local environment near where I lived.

I was 18 at the time, and it taught me some early lessons about the role of advocacy. I'm still learning – there's always more to know about how to make change.

But never let that stop you from trying. I encourage everyone here to get involved in the community around you – no matter your age.

Any time is a good time to get involved when there's so many big issues at stake.

Now I'm with the Climate Change Authority, where we're looking to amplify the voices and views of young Australians in the climate conversation.

After all, the decisions and actions taken today will determine how much of an impact climate change has throughout your lives.

Everything we do, every decision we make, every solution we bring to the table – all will help make the world better than it otherwise would be.

The actions can be small but they add up.

They can also be bold and inspire others to follow you, or embark on their own missions to accelerate from incremental to fundamental change.

We need the voice of Future Generations at the table now – here today, and at COP31, in 2026 – let's hope we get to host it because the youth of Australia and our Pacific neighbours could really play a big role at the event.

The decision is likely to land in mid-June.

But today and this whole week of Climate Action here in Sydney is about you.

Your voice. Your future. Your power to shape the world we live in.

I look forward to welcoming Kal Glanznig, Eezu Tan and Jack Rowland to the stage to share their voices about the role of youth now, and how we can work together for a fair, equitable and *livable* future.

A future where summers aren't dreaded for their heatwaves and incessant bushfire threats.

A future where late-season cyclones like Alfred last week aren't supercharged by warming oceans and the atmosphere.

Where you can swim at the beach in a healthy ocean, have fresh air and wander through pedestrian-friendly cities, or take efficient and affordable public transport.

Where our homes are affordable, comfortable and smartly designed to minimise their how much power and water they use.

A future where our wildlife and wilderness really are wild so that nature's wonders – many of which we are still to identify and understand – keep thriving.

I recognise that it can sometimes feel like big decisions about these issues get made over your heads, or behind your backs. That's harder to pull off if young people are seated right there at the table – showing up and demanding to be part of the conversation.

Let's say you leave here today and take a message of change to the world outside. What do you want to say and who needs to hear it?

Kal, Eezu and Jack will share their views on this in a moment but all of us should be thinking: what do we want and how can we achieve it?

I have always believed that young people are more than just the leaders of tomorrow—you are the leaders of today.

You are already driving the climate movement – innovating, campaigning, and demanding those in power do more. You are right to do so.

To improve your chances of success, I encourage you to make the most of all the tools at your disposal.

Social media has its drawbacks but you've mastered it as a communication and organising tool. There's plenty that those of us working in public policy and political leadership can, and should, learn from you on this.

I encourage you to continue innovating and finding new ways to communicate, inspire and organise, because we're going to need every tool in the box – they're going to need to be sharpened constantly.

Every person in this room today knows that action on climate is urgent.

Every one of you know that climate impacts are already here – affecting our communities, our economy, and our way of life.

Australia has seen record-breaking floods, bushfires and other climate-fuelled catastrophes.

In recent days, about 4 million people have been bracing for tropical Cyclone Alfred and many of them will now be in the midst of recovery efforts. We wish them all the best.

2023 set a high mark for record global heat, only for that record to be broken again last year.

On current trends, though, both years will be relatively cool ones by mid-century.

For too long, some have treated climate action as optional; something to be delayed or punted off into the too-hard-basket.

But delay is simply not an option if we are to tackle global warming.

Future Generations Day is about action. It's about ensuring that the policies delivered now and in the coming years reflect the urgency and ambition required to secure a liveable future. It's about young people coming together to lead, as history shows us you can.

Look at the students who led the Freedom Rides that put a spotlight on the disgraceful treatment of First Nations people in this state.

The young women who fought for the right to vote. The youth-led protests that helped to end apartheid.

Change has often started with young people willing to challenge the status quo.

That's exactly what we are seeing today in the climate movement—young leaders like Eezu, who is influencing global policy at COP29.

Young advocates like Kal, tackling eco-anxiety and showing us that action is the antidote to despair.

And Jack, a climate activist who is using his voice and his life to activate and engage youth on campus, and through his podcasts.

You three are not just demanding action—you are *creating* action which delivers hope and encourages others to be part of the solution in many different and emerging fields of work.

From climate tech startups to grassroots movements, young people are leading the charge toward a cleaner, more just, and more sustainable world.

So today, I want to leave you with a challenge: Don't wait for permission to lead. Take up space. Speak up. Shake things up.

Whether it's writing to your MP (old priorities die hard), mobilising your community, or holding businesses accountable—every action you take sends a message that it's time for strong action on climate.

Think about your purchasing power, find the opportunities to have regular conversations where you study, or devise ideas and solutions you can bring to the kitchen table, the office desk top, and the benches of our parliaments.

Your courage, your ideas and your determination *will* make a difference.

Your voice matters. And together, we can shape the kind of future we want to live in.

Before I hand over to Kal, Eezu and Jack, can I thank Climate Action Week Sydney for delivering Future Generations Day and so many other great activities.

My thanks also to Liz Courtney, James Ladbroke, and William Chan for bringing this idea to life, and UTS for hosting us today.

We need more young people at the table – including as we approach planning for COP31 in 2026.

Now, it's my great pleasure to introduce the incredible youth leaders who will inspire us with their stories, insights, and vision for the future.

Let's make today – and tomorrow – count.