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350 reasons for climate action

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On October 24, through the website www.350.org, as well as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube, the International Day of Climate Action rallied millions of people in 181 countries to participate in more than 5200 events calling for strong action and bold leadership on climate change. According to organisers it was ‘the most widespread day of political action in the planet’s history’.



Credit: Tim Cole

The focus of the campaign, the number 350, refers to the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide that most climate scientists say is the safe upper limit to avoid severe consequences for life on Earth. With current levels around 387 parts per million (ppm), and ahead of Copenhagen’s climate negotiations in December, 350.org organisers were keen to ensure the 350-ppm target is ‘not only on the table, but something we really try for’.

Blair Palese, CEO of 350.org Australia, estimates more than 10 000 Australians, including leading environmental, research and union organisations, took part in 240 events around the country. The day commenced with events on Sydney beaches, and moved to the steps of the Opera House for a concert, a giant human ‘350’, and a tall ship cruising through Sydney Harbour with ‘350’ emblazoned on the masts. Other events included bike rides in Melbourne and Adelaide, 350 frisbees being tossed simultaneously in Brisbane, divers on the Great Barrier Reef highlighting the 350ppm target, and gatherings in remote areas including Tasmania’s Styx rainforest and the Kimberley.

Organisers around the world are now sending photos, videos and letters from the event to their government leaders in the lead up to Copenhagen.

‘We know it’s a challenge but we must align our political agenda to what the science of climate change calls for,’ Ms Palese says.

‘My sense is that most people are disillusioned with petty politics and want to see specific plans for how we will urgently reduce emissions over the next decade. The sheer numbers of organisers and participants in 350 events shows that millions of people are deeply concerned about climate change and want real leadership to address the issue.’

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