

# 2018/14: Should school students take strike action over climate change?

## What they said...

*'We've got involved because at this stage we can't vote, we're not politicians and we want to make a difference'*

*Jean Hinchliffe, 14-year-old student from Fort Street High*

*'The best thing you'll learn about going to a protest is how to join the dole queue'*

*Resources Minister, Matthew Canavan*

## The issue at a glance

On November 30, 2018, thousands of students from hundreds of schools across metropolitan and regional Australia struck from school to demand their politicians act urgently to stop further climate change. Their protest focussed on the Adani coal mine.

Thirty major strike events took place across the country, in every capital city and almost 20 regional centres including Townsville, the Whitsundays, Inverell, Coffs Harbour, Ballarat, Newcastle and Bega. Instead of going to school, students assembled at their nearest Parliament House or Federal MP's office. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/30/climate-change-strike-thousands-of-students-to-join-national-protest>

Some strikes had occurred on previous days.

The strikes were organised by a loose coalition of students titled 'School Strike 4 Climate Action'. The 'School Strike 4 Climate Action' movement was inspired by 15-year-old Swedish student, Greta Thunberg, who struck from school to protest about the impact of climate change on her country and the world. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta\\_Thunberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Thunberg)

The Australian students' actions met with a mixed response. While some politicians, such as the Greens' leader, Adam Bandt, congratulated them on their environmental awareness, others considered the students misguided and ill-informed. The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and the Resources Minister, Matthew Canavan, condemned the student strike and urged the protestors to remain at school. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist>

## Background

The information below has been abbreviated from the Wikipedia entries 'Climate movement' and 'Greta Thunberg'. The full text of each entry can be accessed at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate\\_movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Climate_movement) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta\\_Thunberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Thunberg)

The information regarding School Strike 4 Climate Change can be accessed on the movement's Internet site at <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/about>

## The climate movement

The climate movement is the collective of nongovernmental organizations engaged in activism related to the issues of climate change. It is a subset of the broader environmental movement, but some regard it as a new social movement itself given its scope, strength and activities.

Activism related to climate change began in the 1990s, when major environmental organizations became involved in the discussions about climate, mainly in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) framework. In the 2000s several climate-specific organizations were founded, such as 350.org, Energy Action Coalition, and the Global Call for Climate Action.

The 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen was the first UNFCCC

summit in which the climate movement started showing its mobilization power on a large scale. Between 40,000 and 100,000 people attended a march in Copenhagen on December 12 calling for a global agreement on climate. And activism went beyond Copenhagen, with more than 5,400 rallies and demonstrations taking place around the world simultaneously. The climate movement convened its largest single event in September 21, 2014, when it mobilized 400,000 activists in New York during the People's Climate March (plus several thousands more in other cities), to demand a climate action from the global leaders gathered for the 2014 UN Climate Summit

### The 2014 People's Climate March

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### Student Involvement - Fossil Fuel Divestment

The Fossil Fuel Divestment movement calls for colleges and universities, as well as cities, states, religious institutions, and pension funds to withdraw their investments from fossil fuel companies. 350.org launched their Go Fossil Free campaign in 2012 with Bill McKibben's "Do The Math" speaking tour around the country. 350.org explains that the reasoning behind this campaign is simple: "If it is wrong to wreck the climate, then it is wrong to profit from that wreckage." The Fossil Fuel Divestment movement escalated tactics in the spring of 2015, with 19 students arrested at Yale University, a week-long blockade of Harvard University's administrative buildings, a 70-student sit-in at Tulane University, and other actions for which they could be arrested.

### Greta Thunberg

On 20 August 2018, Greta Thunberg, then in ninth grade, decided to not attend school until the 2018 Swedish general election on 9 September after heat waves and wildfires in Sweden. Her demands were that the Swedish government reduce carbon emissions as per the Paris Agreement. She protested via sitting outside the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) every day during school hours with the sign "Skolstrejk fr klimatet" (school strike for the climate). After the general elections, she continued to strike only on Fridays, which gained worldwide attention. Similar protests were organized in other countries, including The Netherlands, Germany, Finland and Denmark. In Australia, thousands of school students were inspired by Thunberg to strike on Fridays, ignoring Prime Minister Scott Morrison's comments of " more learning in schools and less activism".

On Twitter, she used hashtags and spread online awareness. Thunberg participated in the Rise for Climate demonstration outside the European Parliament in Brussels and the Declaration of Rebellion organized by Extinction Rebellion in London.

On 24 November 2018, she spoke at TEDxStockholm. Towards the conclusion of her talk, Thunberg said, 'We've had thirty years of pep-talking and selling positive ideas. And I'm sorry, but it doesn't work. Because if it would have, the emissions would have gone down by now-they haven't.'

On 4 December 2018, Thunberg addressed the COP24 United Nations climate change summit. On 12 December 2018, Thunberg again addressed the COP24 plenary assembly

### School Strike 4 Climate Change - Australia

The School Strike 4 Climate Action protest began with three students in Castlemaine, inspired by 15-year-old Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, who started boycotting classes before parliamentary elections in her nation in September.

According to the Australian Youth Climate Coalition, the central Victorian students reached out to other schools across the country. Then they sought support from the AYCC in organising and

getting their message out.

The Australian members of Strike 4 Climate Change describe themselves on their Internet page as '... children aged 5-18 from cities and towns across Australia. Most of us have never met before but are united by our concern about our planet. We are striking from school to tell our politicians to take our futures seriously and treat climate change for what it is - a crisis.

They can show us that they care by taking urgent action to move Australia beyond fossil fuel projects (e.g. #StopAdani's mega coal mine) and get the job done of moving us to 100% renewable energy for all.

The group's mission statement continues, 'Climate change is one of the biggest problems facing the world and it isn't being addressed quickly enough.

In Australia, education is viewed as immensely important, and a key way to make a difference in the world. But simply going to school isn't doing anything about climate change. And it doesn't seem that our politicians are doing anything, or at least not enough, about climate change either.

So, as our contribution to the changes we want to see, we are striking from school. We are temporarily sacrificing our education in order to save our futures from climate wrecking projects like the Adani coal mine. '

### **Internet information**

In its December 2 - 8, 2018, Issue, The Pittwater Online News published a report titled 'Students Demand Government Stop Adani Coal Mine and Transition to Solar Power: Big School Walk Out for Climate Action to be followed by more actions'

The report details the strike action taken by students, quotes many of the participants and refers to their plans for further protests. The report contains many photographs of the young protesters and the placards they carried.

The full text can be accessed at <http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/Big-School-Walk-Out-for-Climate-Action-Strike-2018.php>

On December 5, 2018, The Narooma News published an editorial by Ben Smyth titled 'Students speak their mind? How dare they'

The comment argues in support of students' freedom of speech and of their right to voice their concerns regarding climate change.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.naroomanewsonline.com.au/story/5792681/students-speak-their-mind-how-dare-they/>

On December 4, 2018, The Bendigo Advertiser published a letter from Helen Leach titled 'Climate change rallies "should alarm parents"'. The comment argues that children's attitudes have been manipulated by their teachers.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/5789156/students-show-up-pollies-for-lack-of-climate-change-policy-your-say/>

On December 2, 2018, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Peta Credlin titled 'What are we teaching in our schools?'

The point of view criticises the supposed ignorance of the attitudes adopted by the young student protesters and criticises the teachers whom the author believes have shaped these students beliefs.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/what-are-we-teaching-in-our-schools/news-story/a9314257ad98baed44cd22c2a27c2dbc>

On December 1, 2018, The Daily Telegraph published a comment by Satya Marar. the Director of Policy at the Australian Taxpayers' Alliance, titled ' Won't somebody please think of the children?' which criticises the attitudes adopted by the young student protesters. The full text can be accessed at <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/wont-somebody-please->

[think-of-the-children/news-story/568806a5c5f7e1b86d7ef0c94222e6c6](https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jzb.html?ref=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=rss_feed)

On November 30, 2018, The Brisbane Times published a comment by 16-year-old school student, Annalise Tran, titled 'Why the school strike was a mistake, by a student worried by climate change'. The comment presents a number of reasons why such actions are likely to be ineffective and suggests alternative actions that could be taken.

The full text can be accessed at [https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jzb.html?ref=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_source=rss\\_feed](https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jzb.html?ref=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=rss_feed)

On November 30, 2018, The Age published an editorial titled 'The kids are all right over call for action on climate'

The comment defends the actions taken and the views expressed by the young protesters and suggests that current politicians ignore them at their peril.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/the-kids-are-all-right-over-call-for-action-on-climate-20181130-p50jig.html>

On November 30, 2018, Channel 9 published a report titled ' "Save our future": Thousands of school children demand action on climate change'

The article gives details of the student strike action which has taken place across Australia, quoting the views of some of the young participants and the responses of some politicians.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.9news.com.au/2018/11/30/06/36/students-to-miss-school-in-nationwide-climate-change-protest>

On November 29, 2018, The Guardian published a comment by school students Milou Albrecht, Harriet O'Shea Carre and Jean Hinchcliffe titled ' Climate change is the biggest threat to our futures, not striking from school'

The comment details the three students concerns regarding climate change and the actions they want the government to take to reduce the threat.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/29/climate-change-is-the-biggest-threat-to-our-futures-not-striking-from-school>

On November 29, 2018, The Advertiser published a report titled 'Adelaide students to skip school to rally for climate change action'

The article details the student strike action planned to take place in Adelaide.

<https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/south-australia/adelaide-students-to-skip-school-to-rally-for-climate-change-action/news-story/b5f2aa0fbff4516ae428075881204e78>

On November 28, 2018, The Guardian published a news report titled 'Hundreds of students striking over climate change descend on parliament'

The article details the student protests held in Canberra against climate change.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/28/hundreds-of-students-striking-over-climate-change-descend-on-parliament>

On November 28, 2018, The Sydney Morning Herald published a news report titled '"We'll be voting soon": Students take on PM over climate change' giving details of the strike action taken by school students in Canberra.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-ll-be-voting-soon-students-take-on-pm-over-climate-change-20181128-p50iyh.html>

On November 27, 2018, SBS published a report titled 'Hundreds of students are planning to leave school this Friday to protest government inaction on climate change'

The article is largely comprised of comments from young student activists rejecting the criticisms

of Prime Minister Scott Morrison and defending their proposed strike action.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/students-hit-back-at-pm-after-less-activism-in-schools-climate-change-comment>

On November 26, 2018, The Guardian published a report titled ' Scott Morrison tells students striking over climate change to be 'less activist''

The article details the opposition of the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, to the strike action proposed by the young protesters.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist>

On November 23, 2018, Quadrant Online published a comment by Tony Thomas titled 'Why Our Schools Produce Brainwashed Dolts' which criticises what the author claims are the biases of the Australian curriculum, particularly regarding environmental issues.

The full text can be accessed at <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/doomed-planet/2018/11/why-our-schools-produce-brainwashed-dolts/>

On November 8, 2018, the Youth Affairs Council Victoria published a comment by Dr Jessie Mitchell titled 'The power of a vote: how young people have always influenced our political climate'

The piece details the manner in which young people currently and traditionally have sought to influence the political process'

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.yacvic.org.au/blog/the-power-of-a-vote/>

On February 22, 2018, Time published an analysis by Olivia B Waxman titled ' Students Calling for Gun Control Can't Vote Yet. But Age Hasn't Stopped Young Activists in the Past' which gives an overview of political action taken by United States youth.

The full text can be accessed at <http://time.com/5166976/florida-school-shooting-young-protesters/>

On February 9, 2011, the Child Rights International Network published an overview titled 'Civil Rights: Freedom of association and children's rights' which details some of the international conventions which seek to guarantee children's rights.

The full text can be accessed at <https://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/civil-rights-freedom-association-and-childrens-rights>

### **Arguments in favour of school students taking strike action over climate change**

1. As a group that will be highly affected by climate change, school students are important stakeholders

School students are unable to vote until they turn 18. However, supporters of their taking strike action note that they have legitimate concerns regarding how their country is governed and should be able to take action to influence politicians.

Students who have protested for action on climate change and adults who support them argue that the consequences of inaction will be felt most strongly by the young. It is they whose prospects of living on an inhabitable planet are being most harmed by inadequate measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, supporters of school student strikes claim that these young people are entitled to stage protests to protect their future.

On November 28, 2018, a 12-year-old Canberra school student, protesting outside Parliament House, was quoted in The Guardian as saying, 'The politicians aren't helping and we need to take action to save our climate. You need to help us because this is our future.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/28/hundreds-of-students-striking-over-climate-change-descend-on-parliament>

In an article published on SBS, on November 29, 2018, Melbourne student, Jagveer Singh, was

quoted as saying, 'It's our future. We are the ones that will be facing the consequences of the decisions that are made today, and that is why we need to have a say.' <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/students-hit-back-at-pm-after-less-activism-in-schools-climate-change-comment>  
In an opinion piece written by school students Milou Albrecht, Harriet O'Shea Carre and Jean Hinchcliffe and published in The Guardian on November 29, 2018, the young commentators wrote, 'We feel frustrated and let down when we think about the climate crisis and our future. There is so much our politicians could be doing that they aren't. It seems they are in denial. Our government is supposed to protect us, not destroy our chances of a safe future.'  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/29/climate-change-is-the-biggest-threat-to-our-futures-not-striking-from-school>

On November 30, in an article published by Channel 9, 14-year-old Harriet O'Shea Carre was further quoted as saying, 'It's our futures and we want to continue living on this planet and we want to have children who can continue living on this planet.' <https://www.9news.com.au/2018/11/30/06/36/students-to-miss-school-in-nationwide-climate-change-protest>  
Melinda Sanders, in a letter to the editor published in The Age, on December 1, 2018, reiterated the view that it is young people who will bear the heaviest burden as a result of climate inaction and so their opinions have to be heard. Ms Sanders stated, 'Young people like these are our future leaders, thinkers, artists, historians, scientists, etc. They will be the ones to bear the brunt of climate change, and we can but hope they are also the ones who will force government action to arrest this.' <https://www.theage.com.au/national/students-strike-the-young-are-speaking-out--and-will-not-be-silenced-20181130-h18koj.html>

In a letter to the editor published in The Sydney Morning Herald on December 1, 2018, Michael Eckert stated, 'When my daughter announced that she was striking, I asked her whether she was concerned that the PM objected. She responded, "Oh no. He is old. Why should he care? He'll be dead when crocodiles start swimming up George Street. But I'll be alive and trying to dodge those jaws."' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/students-deserve-a-say-on-their-world-s-future-20181130-p50jgu.html>

In an article published in The Guardian on November 7, 2018, a 14-year-old Fort Street high school student, Jean Hinchcliffe, was quoted as saying, 'We've got involved because at this stage we can't vote, we're not politicians and we want to make a difference. We can't stand around waiting. I think it's because climate change is scary seeing that it's our future. This is a fact and not to be debated.' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/07/australian-students-plan-school-strikes-to-protest-against-climate-inaction>

## 2. Students have the capacity to influence political decisions

Supporters of school students taking strike action note that young people have the power to influence political decisions. Prior to reaching eighteen, they are unable to vote; however, that does not mean they are without an interest in political life or the capacity to influence the political process.

In an article published on November 8, 2018, by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Dr Jessie Mitchell noted, 'Heaps of young people are keen to make a positive difference in their communities. When the Victorian Government announced that they would develop a new youth policy in 2015, over 2,000 young people volunteered their ideas about issues like education, employment and mental health. Meanwhile, 53.8% of young Victorians do volunteer work, a quarter take part in environmental activities, and 42.6% get involved in student leadership. Some young people sit on youth advisory bodies to help shape the work of state government, local councils, charities and health services. And more than twenty of the bills passed by Victoria's YMCA Youth Parliament have gone on to become law!' <https://www.yacvic.org.au/blog/the-power-of-a-vote/>

Dr Mitchell also suggests that as young people are potential voters, politicians need to pay attention to their opinions. Once they reach voting age, young people form an influential voting bloc. Dr Mitchell argues, 'Young voters have a lot of power. They are new to elections...And their priorities are often different to those of older voters...a study at the University of Western Sydney

found that young voters aged 18-25 may have been the most powerful age group in influencing the four Australian elections between 2001 and 2010. A big reason for this was their higher than average support for the Greens, which changed the balance of power in parliament.'

<https://www.yacvic.org.au/blog/the-power-of-a-vote/>

Commentators have suggested that school student strike action has the capacity to influence political decisions. In the aftermath of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting on February 14, 2018, thousands of school students across the United States walked off school campuses to demand reform of the country's gun laws. Their protest actions have been claimed to have had some political effect.

In an article published in The Conversation on March 15, 2018, George Rennie, a lecturer in American Politics and Lobbying Strategies at the University of Melbourne, stated, 'Recent news footage showed Senator Marco Rubio and the National Rifle Association's Dana Loesch publicly sparring with students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High, to a chorus of boos and jeers. Millions witnessed their discomfort.

This has already led to some action by states. Florida is looking to pass age restrictions and waiting periods for gun purchases, and Oregon has imposed gun prohibitions on domestic abusers and those with restraining orders.' <https://theconversation.com/articulate-us-teenagers-could-finally-force-action-on-gun-control-92272>

With regard to political responses to the Australian school students' action, on November 26, 2018, the Senate passed a motion in support of the student climate strikers. Sydney Strike Organiser, 14-year-old Jean Hinchliffe, from Fort Street High, responded to news of the Senate's support by stating, 'We thank the Senators who have chosen to stand with young people in Parliament today, and we call on more politicians from all sides of politics to do the same.' <http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/Big-School-Walk-Out-for-Climate-Action-Strike-2018.php>

Young people are clearly aware of the power they hold as potential voters. Clara McArthur, 17, a striking student from Canberra College, has stated, 'Me and my friends here are turning 18 soon, we are able to vote in the next election and if ...[Mr Morrison] won't listen to us that is ridiculous.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-ll-be-voting-soon-students-take-on-pm-over-climate-change-20181128-p50iyh.html>

### 3. School students have the same freedom of expression as other citizens

Defenders of school children's right to protest note that this right, one shared by all human beings, is guaranteed by a number of international Conventions to which Australia is a signatory. Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (December 16, 1966). Article 19 of the Covenant states, 'Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference' and further ' Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.' <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1980/23.html>

Article 21 states, ' The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.' <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1980/23.html>

These rights could be regarded as applying only to adults and therefore not guaranteeing children the right to protest and express their opinions. However, Australia has signed other Conventions which explicitly acknowledge that children share these same rights.

The Child Rights International Network notes 'Civil and political rights for all are enshrined in a raft of international laws, but the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is special because it sets out a number of articles which specifically protect civil and political rights for children.' <https://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/civil-rights-freedom-association-and-childrens-rights>

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all States 'shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.' <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Article 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child further states, 'The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.' <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Relatedly, Article 15 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States must 'recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.' The Article goes on to state 'No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Taken together, these three Articles seek to guarantee that nations which have signed this Convention protect the rights of children within their borders, including the right to protest via the use of their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly.

In December 1996, Robert Ludbrook, wrote an advisory paper for the Australian Federal Parliament titled 'Citizen child: Australian law and children's rights'. Drawing on Articles 12, 13 and 15 Ludbrook states, 'Children can no longer be treated as passive objects about whom parents and teachers can make decisions. They are independent people with increasing powers of self-determination as they grow in maturity and understanding. With very young children the protectionist role of adults predominates, but as children move towards adulthood they are empowered to make more and more important decisions for themselves. Adults can advise and suggest, but children move to a situation where they are increasingly able to make their own choices and determine their own actions.' <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/citizen-child-australian-law-and-childrens-rights/5-childrens-rights-school-education>

#### 4. School students are well-informed about the issue

Defenders of school students' right to strike over political inaction on climate change argue that these young people have valid and informed opinions.

An Age editorial published on November 30, 2018, stated, 'The young people have science and history on their side. Only fringe ideologues continue to reject the reality of existentially dangerous anthropogenic global warming. Civil disobedience has been instrumental in progressive change throughout the ages. The students did not take the action lightly. It follows ongoing government failure that has needlessly crimped investment in renewable energy and has been criticised by industry, investors and consumers.' <https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/the-kids-are-all-right-over-call-for-action-on-climate-20181130-p50jig.html>

The Age editorial cited a young protester, 15-year-old Veronica Hester, justifying the informed action she and other students were taking. Hester stated regarding Prime Minister Morrison, 'If he and our politicians listened to the climate science we have been taught, and took action like those of us in school, we wouldn't have to resort to strike action.' <https://www.theage.com.au/environment/climate-change/the-kids-are-all-right-over-call-for-action-on-climate-20181130-p50jig.html>

One parent who attended a protest with his eight-year-old child and his friends stated, 'They've actually been looking at climate change at school and they have a pretty incredible understanding of the science. I think what's striking in Matt Canavan's [the Resources Minister's] comments is how demeaning he is about young people and what they actually know, and how he underestimates their understanding.'



I heard students today at the rally talking about the IPCC report, talking about the 700 odd days until emissions can peak before we exceed 1.5 degrees. These are kids that actually understand the science in a way that I think most of parliamentarians don't.'

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-30/australian-students-climate-change-protest-scott-morrison/10571168>

Numerous letter writers to The Age supported the strike action taken by students and praised them for their informed position on climate change. In a letter published in The Age on December 1, 2018, Joy Hayman stated, 'Our students are being taught about the seriousness of failing to take action on climate change and the devastating consequences that are already being experienced around the planet. They have every right to express their concern for the world in which they are growing up, while our politicians foolishly continue to bury their heads in the sand.' <https://www.theage.com.au/national/students-strike-the-young-are-speaking-out--and-will-not-be-silenced-20181130-h18koj.html>

Some of the young spokespeople for the student protesters have noted that they have been informed about the issue of climate change not only from their studies at school, but also as a result of their own life experiences. Three young strikers, Milou Albrecht, Harriet O'Shea Carre and Jean Hinchcliffe, wrote a comment which was published in The Guardian on November 29, 2018. They stated, 'Two of us - Milou and Harriet - live in rural Victoria. Throughout our lives, we've witnessed the impacts that drought, bushfires and extreme weather have on a community. We have been forced to evacuate when a bushfire came through our town. It was scary. But it is something that will happen more and more as climate change gets worse...

We feel hurt when we hear people say that we can't think for ourselves because we're still children. This is just an excuse not to listen to us. We are perfectly capable of thinking for ourselves. We deserve to be heard and understood.' <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/29/climate-change-is-the-biggest-threat-to-our-futures-not-striking-from-school>

It has further been noted that tertiary students are also well-informed about the dangers and causes of climate change. Dr Tony Capon, one of the authors of the latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory showing Australia's emissions continuing to rise has stated, 'When we launched this new report the most engaged people at the university were the medical students. They're very well informed young people and in fact, in some ways our politicians are as not as well informed about these issues as they should be.' <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/climate-change-a-health-issue-affecting-australians-now-report/10573072>

##### 5. School students are not jeopardising their education through striking

Supporters of students taking strike action to demand politicians reduce greenhouse gas emissions note that these young people are not damaging their prospects of a good education by so doing.

Some commentators have noted that the action these students have taken is actually an important part of their education as engaged citizens of Australia and the world. An ACT Education Directorate spokesperson said the Territory's Directorate valued student voices in education and would not stop or penalise any student attending a rally, as long as they were supervised by carers in 'their actions as global citizens'. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-ll-be-voting-soon-students-take-on-pm-over-climate-change-20181128-p50iyh.html>

Dr Tony Capon, one of the authors of the latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory showing Australia's emissions continuing to rise has similarly stressed the importance of the students' protest action as part of their political education. Dr Capon stated, '[I]n a liberal democracy, an open country, we want young people to be engaged in the process.' <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/pm/climate-change-a-health-issue-affecting-australians-now-report/10573072>

Clara McArthur, 17, of Canberra College, has noted that every teacher and guardian she had spoken with had been incredibly supportive of the strike. She stated, 'I've only heard praise.' <https://www.smh.com.au/national/we-ll-be-voting-soon-students-take-on-pm-over-climate-change-20181128-p50iyh.html>

Australian Youth Climate Coalition spokesperson, Laura Sykes, has stated that Mr Morrison, in condemning young people for absenting themselves from school, had shown 'irrational outrage' to students who care about their education. <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/mandarin/en/article/2018/11/27/more-learning-less-activism-pm-dismisses-climate-change-school-strike>

Some commentators have seen these strikes as a proof of the young students' educated commitment, rather than as a threat to their education. In The Guardian, on November 30, 2018, environment commentator Naaman Zhou wrote, 'This week thousands of students in every state walked out of school to protest inaction over climate change and the sense that their future is being frittered away.

They had the signs, the statistics, the anger - and the solutions too. I looked around and felt I had seen the future, clever and full of passion.' <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/30/the-school-climate-strike-was-a-new-generations-activism-and-im-so-proud>

There are also students who felt that by taking strike action they were furthering the environmental education of other young people who may not have been sufficiently aware of the dangers posed by climate change. PLAN International and the Australian Youth Climate Coalition have stated, 'Many of those [young people] who knew about the effects of climate change said that educating young people about climate change is vital, as they feel that being armed with the facts makes it more likely that young people will think it is a priority issue and want to take action.' <https://www.plan.org.au/-/media/plan/documents/resources/we-stand-as-one--children-young-people-and-climate-change.pdf>

### **Arguments against school students taking strike action over climate change**

#### 1. The students' action will be ignored by politicians

Those opposed to schoolchildren conducting political strikes argue that politicians will largely ignore them.

Schoolchildren are not yet voters and so are not in a position directly to influence politicians. They cannot make their displeasure felt at the ballot box by voting against candidates who adopt views with which they disagree. Critics note that the young voters' lack of influence has been demonstrated by recent decisions taken in the federal Parliament.

On the 26th of November, at 5pm the Australian Senate passed a motion in support of the student strikers. On the same date, fifteen minutes later, the Senate passed a motion moved by the National Party in support of expanding Australia's coal production .

<http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/Big-School-Walk-Out-for-Climate-Action-Strike-2018.php>

The Coal-Fired Power Station motion passed by the Senate included the statements that 'the International Energy Agency estimates the growth in demand for coal in the Asia Pacific will increase by 492 million tonnes of coal equivalent by 2040; Australia's net exports of coal would grow by around 20% to around 430 million tonnes of coal equivalent by 2040; [and] the production and export of Australian high quality coal is good for jobs in regional Australia and the broader economy.' <https://www.openaustralia.org.au/senate/?id=2018-11-26.218.1> Critics of the children's actions note that the subsequent Senate vote supporting expanded coal production in Australia demonstrates that the students' strike has had no significant impact on politicians.

The Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, has shown particular disregard of and hostility toward the actions of the striking children. Mr Morrison stated, ' We do not support our schools being turned into parliaments.' <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist>

Even some of those who have supported the schoolchildren's strike action have noted how little impact their views appear to have had upon Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

Australian Youth Climate Coalition spokesperson, Laura Sykes, stated 'It was shocking see our prime minister condemning students as young as eight, who are sacrificing a day of schooling to stand up for a safe climate future...When young people try to have a voice in politics, Scott Morrison is shutting them down, yet he's happy to listen to the coal lobby and big corporations who continue to profit from making climate change worse.' <https://www.theguardian.com>

[/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist)

The leader of the Greens, Adam Brandt, similarly noted the disregard with which the Prime Minister had greeted the students' demands. Senator Brandt stated, 'The PM is unbelievably out of touch with young people, not only in Australia but around the world. These students want a leader to protect their future, but they got a hectoring, ungenerous and condescending rebuke...'

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist>

Some commentators have suggested that the average age of politicians and their focus on what they believe will immediately win them votes cause them to ignore the political and environmental views of schoolchildren. In an opinion piece published in Vox on July 14, 2017, 16-year-old American student Sydney Sauer, stated, 'The people who lead our country won't be alive 60 years from now to reap the consequences of their actions. It's much easier to improve areas that they can measure and use for re-election, like unemployment and health care.

Environmental issues, on the other hand, pose a measure of success that they won't be able to experience or quantify. And because of this, when forced to choose between funding an oil pipeline and cutting back on fossil fuels, the majority of our current leaders would choose the environmentally detrimental option for the sake of jobs and industry.' <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2017/7/14/15959968/climate-change-teenager>

## 2. The students' demands are vague and ill-informed

It has been claimed that the demands of the student strikers were general and imprecise and so could not be acted upon by any government. It is also argued that these demands indicate that the students do not appreciate the complexity of the issues about which they are protesting.

Sixteen-year-old student, Annalise Tran, has criticised those students who took strike action, claiming, 'These climate-change protests were declared by young people passionate about their future, but their agenda is misguided. From what I have researched, their main motive is to persuade the government to do more. But what does "doing more" mean? The demand is so vague and unspecific that the government has nothing to act upon.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jbz.html>

Ms Tran has further stated, 'Some people will argue that protest is an effective way to create change, as seen throughout history. But those protests were in reaction to specific cases of injustice. In the United States, the 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks led to a mass boycott of buses that resulted in a Supreme Court finding that racial segregation on buses was unconstitutional. In Australia, people rallied for the specific cause marriage equality - not the broad issue of discrimination - and to good effect.

These climate-change protesters can't stir change without articulating the specific change they have in mind. The government is not going to listen to an unclear demand, or fob it off with an empty assurance that it will "do more".' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jbz.html>

It has further been argued that these young people are acting in ignorance, making demands which even if they were met would have little impact on global warming and would damage the Australian economy.

In an opinion piece published in The Daily Telegraph on December 2, 2018, Peta Credlin stated, 'If our schoolchildren learnt more economics, they'd know that coal and gas are among our biggest exports and that it doesn't make sense to regard them as evil here at home while exporting them for use overseas. If there was more economics and less activism, they'd also know that if we don't have exports, we can't pay for all the imported consumer goods like the smart phones that so many of them seem to spend their lives on.'

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/what-are-we-teaching-in-our-schools/news-story/a9314257ad98baed44cd22c2a27c2dbc>

In an opinion piece published in The Daily Telegraph on December 1, 2018, Satya Marar similarly stated, 'One wonders just how many of these kids, who've skipped classes that form part of their taxpayer-funded education to wave signs with their friends, understand that Australia only accounts for 1.8 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions- meaning that it would make no material impact whatsoever on climate change if we were literally wiped out tomorrow.' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/wont-somebody-please-think-of-the-children/news-story/568806a5c5f7e1b86d7ef0c94222e6c6>

Marar has further asked, 'How many of them understand that heavy-handed government intervention in the name of climate policy that they're lobbying for - such as generous corporate handouts for wind and solar, have contributed to high-priced and unreliable electricity in Australia.' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/wont-somebody-please-think-of-the-children/news-story/568806a5c5f7e1b86d7ef0c94222e6c6>

Critics of the students' actions have acknowledged their passion while at the same time condemned them for being naive and ill-informed. Marar has stated, 'Passionately fighting for something you believe in is a trait that will serve any child throughout their life. But just as important is the notion of responsibility, including the need to fully appreciate exactly what one is protesting for and what the ultimate implications are.' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/opinion/wont-somebody-please-think-of-the-children/news-story/568806a5c5f7e1b86d7ef0c94222e6c6>

### 3. The students are being manipulated by teachers and others

Opponents of school students taking action to force politicians to be more proactive on climate change argue that many of these young people have had their opinions shaped by teachers and others. Critics argue that the students are simply being manipulated by adults, such as teachers, who are using them to promote political agendas they do not understand.

On December 2, 2018, The Daily Telegraph published the following comment by Peta Credlin:

'[W]hat we don't need, and should never have, is this brainwashing by teachers who are not committed to their real job of shaping big minds and brave spirits, preferring instead to churn out graduates with shallow intellects and the character of lemmings...

If our school students learnt more philosophy, they'd know that the beginning of wisdom is to observe, and to question and not ...to allow themselves to be used, by leftie teachers, as human shields in a political fight against the Morrison government.' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/rendezview/what-are-we-teaching-in-our-schools/news-story/a9314257ad98baed44cd22c2a27c2dbc>

In a letter to the editor published in the Bendigo Advertiser on December 4, 2018, Helen Leach presented a similar, if more moderate view. Leach argued, 'The student rallies in Melbourne and regional centres calling for climate change action should alarm parents all over Victoria: not that students shouldn't be politically aware or even active - if they genuinely understand the issue. My concern is that Victorian students are being subjected to the political and ideological ideas of their politically active teachers without parents knowing what is being taught - from climate change theories to gender fluid theories to sexual and reproductive education at very young ages.' <https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/5789156/students-show-up-pollies-for-lack-of-climate-change-policy-your-say/>

New South Wales Parents' Council president Rose Cantali has stated that teachers should not project their political opinions onto young minds. Ms Cantali argued, 'I think children are very sensitive about teachers' opinions. They're easily influenced by their teachers because the teachers are seen to be ones who have a lot of power and impart knowledge. As president of the New South Wales Parents' Council, I would be concerned because the ideologies are not in-keeping with my own.' <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/teachers-encourage-kids-to-skip-school-for-climate-change-protest/news-story/59f4b09351c52a2f8b5aba5e7738adf9>

Some critics argue that the Australian curriculum endorses a radical environmentalist agenda that opposes the use of non-renewable resources. Tony Thomas, in an opinion piece published in Quadrant Online, on November 23, 2018, stated, 'The curricula specifies that kids be

exposed to a "diversity of views and values". But the only viewpoints and values I have found during much exploration of school resource material involve Left-half diversity, starting with anarchic anti-capitalism. Citing Al Gore is standard fare. How many teachers would put their jobs on the line by citing contrarian environmentalist Bjorn Lomborg or ex- Czech president and sceptic Vaclav Klaus? Pushing "sustainability" is mandatory in teaching.' <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/doomed-planet/2018/11/why-our-schools-produce-brainwashed-dolts/>

#### 4. The students are jeopardising their education

Opponents of the students taking strike action to demand politicians reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions argue that these young people belong in school, gaining a formal education. They further argue that by absenting themselves from school students are risking their opportunity to acquire skills which will enable them to find a place in the workforce. In a debate within the federal Parliament, Prime Minister Scott Morrison stated, 'We are committed to all of these things [reducing greenhouse gases and developing renewable energy], but I will tell you what we are also committed to - kids should go to school.' The Prime Minister went on to state, 'Each day I send my kids to school and I know other members' kids should also go to school but we do not support our schools being turned into parliaments.'  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/26/scott-morrison-tells-students-striking-over-climate-change-to-be-less-activist>

The Prime Minister further stated, 'What we want is more learning in schools and less activism in schools.'  
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-29/should-kids-be-part-of-activism-and-protests/10566178>

Those who hold views similar to the Prime Minister's appear to believe that debating environmental issues and then taking action about them is a misuse of young people's opportunities for formal education and threatens their chances of establishing a secure economic future for themselves and the country..

Resources Minister, Matthew Canavan, stated, 'Taking off school and protesting? You don't learn anything from that. The best thing you'll learn about going to a protest is how to join the dole queue. Because that's what your future life will look like, up in a line asking for a handout, not actually taking charge for your life and getting a real job.'  
<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/climate-change-protest-will-lead-to-dole-queue-minister-tells-students-20181130-p50jbt.html>

Mr Canavan additionally argued that children should be in school learning about how to build mines, do geology and how to drill for oil and gas, 'which is one of the most remarkable science exploits in the world'. The Minister concluded, 'These are the type of things that excite young children and we should be great at as a nation.'  
<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/climate-change-protest-will-lead-to-dole-queue-minister-tells-students-20181130-p50jbt.html>

A New South Wales Education Department spokesperson stated, 'While the (department) understands some students are passionate about this topic, all students who are enrolled at school are expected to attend that school whenever instruction is provided.'  
<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/teachers-encourage-kids-to-skip-school-for-climate-change-protest/news-story/59f4b09351c52a2f8b5aba5e7738adf9>

The Education Department spokesperson further stated, ' Any student not in classes on a school day will be marked absent and may be subject to the school's disciplinary code.'  
<https://thebigsmoke.com.au/2018/12/06/kids-may-protest-laws-do-not-protect-them-protest/>

#### 5. There are more effective and legal actions the students could take to reduce climate change

Opponents of school students striking to urge governments to address climate change argue that there are more effective actions the young people could take. Sixteen-year-old student, Annalise Tran, has criticised those students who took strike action, claiming, 'Rather than demanding the government "do something", the student protesters should look at their own actions and reflect on how they can make a tangible, practical difference. The climate change threat confronts our generation because of the culture of waste and

consumerism in which we have been raised and in which we continue to live. The only people who can change this culture is us - our generation.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jbz.html>

Ms Tran goes on to suggest, ' We are the ones who can bring about mass change. To change this culture, we should stop treating the things we have as disposable. (Think about the number of pens we lose - and then think about the resources that go into making them, and how they don't decompose.)

We should stop buying so many things that we will inevitably throw out (fast-fashion shoppers, I'm talking about you). We should stop buying things with packaging. We should lobby the companies that package them to stop wasting resources.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jbz.html>

Ms Tran concludes, 'We should make recycling of soft plastics common. We should stop littering. There is much our generation can change by modifying our behaviour. If we get enough people to do this - even the numbers taking part in these protests - we will start to see the change that the government is not able to make... We can make a difference despite our age. The best way to do this is by showing older generations how we - by our own actions - can change and shape our world.' <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/why-the-school-strike-is-a-mistake-by-a-student-worried-by-climate-change-20181130-p50jbz.html>

Commentators have further noted that striking is not an action that Australian schoolchildren are legally sanctioned to take. Ugur Nedim, an accredited criminal law specialist and the principal of Sydney Criminal Lawyers, has noted, 'Participating in an "unlawful assembly" is an offence under section 545C of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW) which carries a maximum penalty of six months in prison and/or a \$550 fine.

Section 545C states, "Whosoever knowingly joins an unlawful assembly or continues in it shall be taken to be a member of that assembly, and shall, on conviction before the Local Court, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding 5 penalty units, or both."

For any protest, rally or demonstration to be lawful, it must comply with the provisions of Part 4 (comprising sections 22 to 27) of the Summary Offences Act 1988 (NSW) which prescribes a range of requirements which must be fulfilled before an assembly can be considered "lawful".'

<https://thebigsmoke.com.au/2018/12/06/kids-may-protest-laws-do-not-protect-them-protest/>

Nedim concludes, 'Evidently, protesting in New South Wales is not as simple as gathering like-minded individuals who are concerned about the existing state of political or social affairs, creating a few placards and taking to public parks or streets.

Rather, police in NSW wield enormous power when it comes to determining which public assemblies are allowed to proceed, and which are not.' <https://thebigsmoke.com.au/2018/12/06/kids-may-protest-laws-do-not-protect-them-protest/>

This warning is offered with specific reference to the limitations which can be imposed on student protests.

### **Further implications**

School Strike 4 Climate Change is calling for another student strike on March 15, 2019.

The movement's Internet site states, 'Some of us are striking for a week, some for a day, some for half a day. Others are striking a day a week. We'll keep striking for as long as it takes for our politicians to take the action we need to stop dangerous climate change. You should do whatever works best for you.' <https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/support-us>

The site continues 'Some of us will be outside our Federal MP's office with a simple sign...Some of us are meeting with other kids to let them know what we're doing and why.'

<https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/support-us>

The anticipated school strike action will be taking place in the run-up to the next federal election. The Australian Electoral Commission has advised that May 18, 2019, is the last possible day on

which a half-senate election can be held. As governments try to avoid holding separate House and half-senate elections, May 18, 2019, is effectively the last date for holding the next House of Representatives election. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-08-22/the-when-and-how-of-calling-the-next-federal-election/10153686>

It seems likely that student protest will intensify once the election campaign begins. Both state and territory education departments and the federal government are likely to react to reduce the extent of student activism and absenteeism.

It is possible that education departments may revisit truancy provisions to make it more difficult for students to be absent from school without punitive consequences. All states and territories have regulations requiring student attendance. In New South Wales, for example, 'compulsory school-age' means that all children from six years of age are legally required to be enrolled at and attending school or to be registered for home schooling. After they complete Year 10, and until they turn 17 years of age, students have the option of full-time school attendance, full-time vocational training or part-time vocational training combined with part-time employment.

[https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/media/documents/attendance-behaviour-engagement/attendance/attend\\_schools.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/media/documents/attendance-behaviour-engagement/attendance/attend_schools.pdf)

It is ultimately the parents' responsibility to ensure their children attend school. The Victorian regulations state, 'Parents are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.'

<https://tinyurl.com/y9kpszwt>

The grounds under which a Victorian school principal might consider a student absence allowable are 'medical and dental appointments; bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student; school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes; cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance and family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.'

<https://tinyurl.com/y9kpszwt> None of these justifications for student absence would allow repeated absences in order to attend protests. The Victorian regulations explicitly state that the principal would not be able to excuse absences where 'the student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval.' <https://tinyurl.com/y9kpszwt> It is possible that a protest strike would be regarded as essentially a social activity. It is also possible that regulations might be altered explicitly to prohibit student strike action.

However, even were strikes to be directly prohibited, this is unlikely to prevent their occurring. There are negligible penalties that could be imposed on parents who permitted their children to take strike action and even less that could be done with regard to parents whose children took strike action without parental permission. School refusal is not regarded as something for which parents can be held responsible. <https://tinyurl.com/y9kpszwt>

It is also possible that laws restricting group protests in public places could also be changed in order to make it easier for police to prohibit such action. However, there would be very little time in which to have such laws put in place and as state laws they would need to be proposed and passed by state governments. There is little political incentive for a state government to act in this way. Indeed, they would be likely to attract significant adverse publicity for appearing to be stifling young people's freedom of expression.

Of more immediate political significance is the fact that any attempt to prohibit student strike action over climate change would adversely affect the federal government's electoral prospects. National ReachTel polling conducted after the Student Strike for Climate Action on November 30, 2018, revealed widespread support for the students.

The Australian Youth Climate Coalition released results from the survey of 2345 people, which found 62.7 per cent thought school students had a right to demand action from the Government on climate change. Among Labor voters, this rose to 86.4 per cent. <https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/climate-change/more-climate-protests-planned-for-saturday-as->

[australians-back-student-activists/news-story/bad8c051ae23a69706b1d4aff5304a43](https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/climate-change/more-climate-protests-planned-for-saturday-as-australians-back-student-activists/news-story/bad8c051ae23a69706b1d4aff5304a43) A clear majority of voters supports the student strikes. Thus, the young people's campaign is likely to worsen the situation of a government that is already deeply unpopular.

<https://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/climate-change/more-climate-protests-planned-for-saturday-as-australians-back-student-activists/news-story/bad8c051ae23a69706b1d4aff5304a43><https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/nov/26/morrison-government-trails-labor-by-10-points-in-latest-newpoll> Attempting to prohibit student strikes would only compound voter dissatisfaction.