

Millions raise voice for JAILED climate activists and anti-protest laws

POSTED ON [DECEMBER 13, 2022](#) BY [COUNTERACTIVE](#)

19/12 EDIT: Violet Coco was given bail, and two other activists from [Blockade Australia](#) also received reasonable sentences with some serious charges being dropped. They were also facing possible jail. We will never know, but the attention and uproar this issue has generated may have led the prosecution to being more reasonable in a plea deal. This is a live issue however, dozens are facing charges under the laws passed earlier in the year. We will be in contact with signatories after the Xmas break. **Please share and sign [THIS ACTION](#)** and you can find sample tweets, tips for [socials and images here](#)

We were honoured to play a leading role in coordinating this massive, diverse response in support of climate activists facing unprecedented repression – along with some other brilliant grassroots organisers, from Wage Peace, Legal Observers NSW and elsewhere in a coalition to #ProtectProtest with the support of some excellent NGO's including NSW Council of Civil Liberties, Amnesty, Human Rights Law centre, and always staunch activist support from Julia at Environmental Defenders Office. We believe it is well past time to see broader support for activists and we are thrilled.

Over 230 organisations – listed below – representing millions of members across the country have united to condemn the recent 15 month jail sentence for climate activist Deanna ‘Violet’ Coco and to express concern about increasing repression, including the recent introduction of new anti protest laws in multiple states. (12 December)

“We are seeing fundamental democratic principles stripped before our eyes at an alarming rate. Violet is the 5th person to receive a jail sentence in the last 12 months for peaceful climate activism, as repression mounts against community activists across the nation. She is one of thousands taking extraordinary action in the face of an urgent crisis.”* said Kelly O’Shanassy of Australian Conservation Foundation.

On 2 December, Violet, from Fireproof Australia, was sentenced to 15 months in custody with a non parole period of 8 months. Her appeal for bail will be heard on 13th December. A [solidarity action](#) will take place outside Downing Centre Court.

We reject [the claim from Premier Perrottet](#) that protest should not inconvenience people, and are concerned about the message this sends in a democracy. Peaceful but disruptive protests have won many of the rights we take for granted today, including the 8 hour day, voting rights, end to conscription, and to enjoy the forests and precious places we defended. Australia is a signatory to [conventions protecting our right to freedom of movement, association, peaceful assembly, and political speech](#) which the government must respect, and we must defend.

*NSW courts prison term against climate protester, Deanna Cook and refusal to grant bail until a March 2020 appeal hearing.
Peaceful protesters should never be criminalised or imprisoned."*

Violet was charged with several offences, including disrupting vehicles, failing to comply with police direction and resisting or hindering police. The charges arose from her action [blocking one lane of traffic on the Sydney Harbour Bridge](#) for approximately 25 minutes.

"It's outrageous that the state wastes resources seeking jail time and locking up peaceful protestors in custody at the expense of taxpayers. In contrast, fossil fuel corporations are contributing to climate collapse, yet have bi-partisan support for further mining and their subsidies continue at a rate of [\\$22,000](#) a minute."

Lucy Manne, 350.org

Protestors from Fireproof Australia, Extinction Rebellion, Blockade Australia and Frontline Action on Coal and many more have engaged in peaceful civil disobedience in recent years in support of urgent action on climate change. Thousands have been involved, representing the voices of many more.

"The Aboriginal Legal Service was born out of a protest movement in the 1970s. You would be hard-pressed to find any win for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights that wasn't brought about by public protest.

There is no climate justice without racial justice. The right to assemble and demonstrate in our streets, towns and cities is a fundamental cornerstone of democracy. For marginalised communities, public protests enable us to be seen and heard, even — and especially — when those in power would rather suppress our voices. We condemn in the strongest terms this government crackdown on our right to protest."

Karly Warner, Aboriginal Legal Service NSW

The vast majority of Australians across the political spectrum support, and voted for, strong action on climate. People should not be concerned they could risk heavy penalties simply for taking to the streets. New anti-protest legislation in several states is wide open to police misinterpretation. NSW has already seen increased policing of peaceful NGO-led climate protests and police threats of invoking the laws against a wide variety of actions since their introduction in April.

"This state's ongoing repression of protestors through parliament passing harsher laws, police seeking draconian bail conditions and surveilling protestors, and prosecutors seeking custodial sentences shows just how much contempt this government holds for protestors and the environment. The repression of peaceful protestors must end."

Josh Pallas, NSW Council for Civil Liberties

*6 jail sentences have been applied to nonviolent activists in NSW in the last year. 4 have successfully appealed. Please also note that references to explosives devices in media refer simply to a flare, also used recently by soccer fans.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

Environmental Studies and Community Association for 1980s

“Repression will not cool the planet. Punitive laws will not slow the pace of environmental destruction. Incarceration will not create a liveable planet. Collective resistance is vital and urgent.”

Blockade Australia activists Emma Dorge and Wenzel Auch also face custodial sentences arising from Port of Botany protests, at Downing Centre Court on Wednesday December 14 and Thursday December 15 respectively.

Clancy Mayer, Blockade Australia spokesperson, and also facing charges under recent anti protest laws

“It is a disgrace that in NSW a young woman is facing up to 15 months in jail for a protest that blocked traffic for 25 minutes. The right to protest is an essential part of a functioning democracy and one which trade unionists have fought hard to safeguard all around the world. The jailing of Violet Coco shows this right is under attack in NSW today. Public protest has a long and proud history in NSW and has helped shape our state for the better”

Darren Greenfield, State Secretary CFMEU C&G NSW

“Many unions will be in attendance at the protest tomorrow to support Violet. UnionsNSW condemns the imprisonment of environmental activist Violet Coco and demands her immediate release. As a movement that was born out of protest we unanimously call for these laws to be repealed by law makers. The most important social changes have been achieved through protest with unions at the forefront of many of them.”

Vanessa Seagrove, Assistant Secretary of UnionsNSW

“Like MLK and Gandhi, Violet Coco took a courageous, nonviolent stand for the common good. People were inconvenienced, not harmed. It’s so wrong that she is jailed for advocating for a liveable planet, while the people who legislated these excessive penalties are jeopardising our future by allowing the expansion of coal and gas mining.”

Thea Ormerod, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change

“Every single adult and child in New South Wales has a fundamental human right to peaceful assembly. Australia is bound by international law to uphold this right which extends to all gatherings for peaceful purposes, regardless of the degree of public support. Importantly, the right to peaceful assembly can only be legally limited in ways that are strictly necessary and proportionate. These measures were rammed through the NSW Parliament without any adequate scrutiny or consultation. We now see Deanna ‘Violet’ Coco, refused Bail in circumstances where it would normally be granted and sentenced to 456 days in prison for stopping traffic for 25 minutes. It is impossible for the NSW Government or the Opposition to establish that these measures meet these necessity and proportionality thresholds established under international human right law.”

Kerry Weste, President, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

“In the early 1980s the Wilderness Society originated out of one of the most massive acts of civil disobedience in Australia’s history, the campaign to save the Franklin River. Peaceful, non-violent protest is an essential part of a functioning democracy. Without it, today the Franklin River would be dammed, and other natural wonders like Kakadu, K-gari / Fraser

represents a concerning escalation in NSW's crackdown on people's right to protest, and to address human rights abuses including climate inaction."

Nikita White, Amnesty International Australia – [AMNESTY MEDIA RELEASE HERE](#)

PEOPLE AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT ONGOING INCLUDE LARISSA PAYNE, COUNTERACT: 0411 295 904 and WARREN SMITH, MUA: 0400 368 945

See below for this record breaking list of signatories – not only is 230+ brilliant for a few days turnaround but the variety and diversity is astounding – millions from all walks of life cherish our democracy and the role of protest – we are so grateful. [you can still submit your organisation here](#) to be contacted for future activation and please [sign and share this email action](#)

We have been trying for over a decade to raise the profile of increasing attacks on activists, and monitoring repression – surveillance, police violence and harassment, increasing penalties for activists, anti protest laws and we really need to see the broader sector step up for funding and organisational support for this work. [You can check a brief overview of some work here.](#)

We have continued to work with the #ProtectProtest collaboration, and hope it can develop into something bigger in 2023. We also welcome the statement from CFMMEU leader, Cristy Cain released Thurs 15th – **"The CFMMEU will not sit by while any government in this country seeks to remove one of the cornerstones of our democracy. If these laws are allowed to stand no worker, no citizen, no member of the community will be safe from the threat of government overreach."**



Signatories A-C

[Aid/Watch](#)

[Amnesty International Australia](#)

[Andrew Denton](#)

[Animal Liberation NSW](#)

[Animal Liberation Australia](#)

[Antipoverty Centre](#)

[Arid Lands Environment Centre](#)

[Armidale Action on Coal Seam Gas and Mining](#)

[Arshak Makichyan](#)

[Asylum Seeker Resource Centre \(ASRC\)](#)

[Australian Conservation Foundation](#)

[Australian Democracy Network](#)

[Australian Forests and Climate Alliance](#)

[Australian Lawyers Alliance](#)

[Australian Lawyers for Human Rights](#)

[Australian Manufacturing Workers Union \(NSW State Division\)](#)

[Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Australia](#)

[Australian Marine Conservation Society](#)

[Australian Nonviolence Projects](#)

[Australia Palestine Advocacy Network](#)

[Australian Progress](#)

[Australian Religious Response to Climate Change](#)

[Australian Services Union NSW ACT \(Services\) Branch](#)

[Australian Services Union Victorian Private Sector Branch](#)

Beyond Gas Network

Beyond War

Black Flag Sydney

Black Wallaby Forest Action

Blockade Australia

Bob Brown Foundation

Brisbane Catholic Workers

Dr Luke Buckmaster

BurnZero.com

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action

Caldera Environment Centre

Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC)

Castan Centre for Human Rights Law (Monash University)

Central Victoria Climate Action

Centre for Climate Safety

Centre for People, Place and Planet, Edith Cowan University

CFMEU Construction and General Division

Chipstop Campaign Against Woodchipping

Cristy Clark

Claire O'Rourke, Author, Together We Can

ClimActs

CLIMARTE

Climate Action Monaro

Climate Action Network Australia

Climate Justice Programme

Climate Justice Union

Commons Social Change Library

Comms Declare

Community Action for Rainbow Rights

Community Legal Centres Australia

Community Legal Centres NSW

Community Power Agency

Conservation Council ACT Region

Conservation Council of SA

Conservation Council of WA (CCWA)

CoPower (Co-operative Power Australia)

CounterAct

Signatories D-N

Dan McNamee, Musician, Art Vs Science

Darebin Climate Action Now

Defend the Right to Protest

Digital Rights Watch

Do Gooder

Doctors for the Environment Australia

Drum Rebellion

East Gippsland Climate Action Network

Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education

[Extinction Rebellion Australia](#)

[Extinction Rebellion Cairns](#)

[Fireproof Australia](#)

[First Dog on the Moon](#)

[FlightFree Australia](#)

[Flinders University](#)

[Free Gaza Australia](#)

[Fridays for Future Australia](#)

[Frenzal Rhomb](#)

[Friends of Bats and Habitat Gippsland](#)

[Friends of Glebe Wetlands, Bega](#)

[Friends of the Earth Australia](#)

[Friends of the Earth Melbourne](#)

[Friends of the Forest – Mogo](#)

[Frontline Action on Coal](#)

[Galilee Rising](#)

[Geelong Sustainability](#)

[GetUp](#)

[El Gibbs, writer, disability advocate](#)

[Glen Eira Emergency Climate Action Network \(GECAN\)](#)

[Goongerah Environment Centre](#)

[GraceTree](#)

[Grassroots Action Network Tasmania](#)

[Grata Fund](#)

Matthew Hoh, Centre For International Policy

Dr Tamar Hopkins

Human Rights Law Centre

Dr Rebecca Huntley, Author, "How to Talk About Climate Change in a Way That Makes a Difference"

Dan Ilic

Institute of Collaborative Race Research

International PEN Melbourne Centre

Inner Melbourne Community Legal Centre (Police Accountability Project)

IPAN (Independent and Peaceful Australia Network)

Jewish Labour Bund Melbourne

Jews Against Fascism

Kai Wild, Author – The 99th Koala

Ketan Joshi, Author "Windfall: Unlocking a fossil free future"

Koala Action Inc

Jumbunna Research, UTS

Justice Reform Initiative

Knitting Nanas Hunter Loop

Sydney Knitting Nannas & Friends

Kooyong Climate Change Alliance

Lane Cove Sustainability Action Group

Carmen Lawrence, Academic, Ex WA Premier, Head Australian Labor Party

Legal Observers NSW

Liberty Victoria

Lighter Footprints

Margaret River Regional Environment Centre

Dr Francis Markham, Research Fellow, ANU

Maritime Union of Australia (Sydney Branch)

Melbourne Activist Legal Support

Muslim Collective

Nannas for Native Forests

National Justice Project

National Tertiary Education Union (NSW)

Nature Conservation Council NSW

George Newhouse, Adjunct professor

Nillumbik Climate Action Team

North East Forest Alliance

Signatories O-Y & INT

Dr Natalie Osborne, Environmental planning lecturer, Griffith Uni

Original Power

Oxfam Australia

PASA (Philippines Australia Solidarity Association)

Paul Gilding

Pace E Bene

Pax Christi Australia

Peace in Papua

People's Climate Assembly

Queensland Conservation Council

Queensland Council for Civil Liberties

Redfern Legal Centre

Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU)

Rising Tide

Save the Bay Coalition

School Strike 4 Climate

Scientists Warning Foundation, California, US

Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network Ltd

South East Forest Rescue

South East Region Conservation Alliance (SERCA)

Sustainable Living Armidale

Sustainable Living Armidale (Transport)

Sustainable Living Armidale (Climate Action)

Anna Spargo-Ryan, Writer / A Kind of Magic

Spirit of Eureka SA

Dr Joan Staples

Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies

Stop Russell Vale Mine

Sweltering Cities

Sydney Institute of Criminology

Tom Tanuki

The Australia Institute Tasmania

The Future Makers

[Tomorrow Movement](#)

[Transition Streets Geelong](#)

[UnionsNSW](#)

[Uni Students for Climate Justice](#)

[United Workers Union](#)

[University of Melbourne Student Union Environment Department](#)

[UNSW Centre for Crime, Law and Justice](#)

[UTS Criminal Justice Cluster](#)

[Victorian Pride Lobby](#)

[Dr Blanche Verlie RMIT Uni/Author of Learning to Live with Climate Change](#)

[Vote Climate](#)

[Vote Earth Now](#)

[Wage Peace](#)

[Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance VIC](#)

[Water for Rivers](#)

[What Can I Do? Australia](#)

[White Rose Society Australia](#)

[Wollongong Against War and Nuclear weapons \(WAWAN\)](#)

[Women's Environmental Leadership Australia \(WELA\)](#)

[Women's Justice Network](#)

[Workers for Climate Action](#)

[WSU Network for Law and Human Rights](#)

[Yarra Climate Action Now](#)

[Yassmin Abdel-Magied](#)



[ABOUT](#)

[NEWS](#)

[PROJECTS](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[DONATE](#)

Public Services International (Asia Pacific Regional Office)

World Animal Protection ANZ

[We have an international version of this letter still open you can join here](#)

We are very grateful for the support from the Socialist Alliance, Greens and the Communist Party, however we wanted this to be a non-partisan list.

POSTED IN [UNCATEGORIZED](#)

TAGGED [BLOCKADE AUSTRALIA](#), [CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE](#), [CLIMATE](#), [NVDA](#), [POLICING](#), [REPRESSION](#)

SUBSCRIBE

First Name *

Last Name

Email *

Post Code *

ZIP / Postal Code



[ABOUT](#)

[NEWS](#)

[PROJECTS](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[DONATE](#)

KEEP UPDATED

