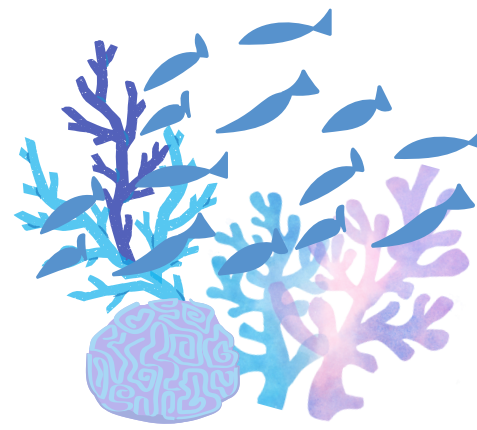


How to talk about climate change and the Great Barrier Reef



Climate change is the number one threat to the Great Barrier Reef. However, talking about climate change in a way that motivates action can be tricky. Here are some quick facts and tips to help community Reef protection champions navigate those reef-climate conversations.

Ingredients for change

First, we need to understand the ingredients for change that might drive people to act for the Reef. Research suggests these are that people need to:

-  Feel like they are capable of taking action for the Reef
-  Be reminded that the Reef and what it represents is a part of who we are
-  Feel like we are in this together and that together we can make a difference for the Reef
-  Feel a mix of positive and negative emotions towards the Reef such as hope and grief











What does this mean for communicating about climate change and the Reef? Here are some recommendations from the behaviour change researchers.

Messages and framing

Research shows that climate messages that talk about the Reef are more effective than generic messages about climate change [1]. Specifically, talking about the Reef can make people more likely to say they'll adopt energy reduction behaviours. Here's how you can use the Reef to create messages that can motivate climate action:

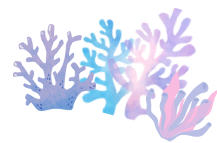
Calls to action

Many Australians are aware and concerned about the impacts of climate change on the Reef. What they are unsure about is what they can do to help. We can encourage taking climate actions for the Reef, such as:

-  Highlight the iconic nature of the Reef (e.g. The Reef is a natural wonder that is part of who we are).
 -  Emphasise the collective and use motivational language (e.g. WE can SUPPORT) instead of focusing on personal and restrictive language (e.g. YOU can REDUCE).
 -  Don't focus too much on explaining the threat. Most people are aware and concerned about the impacts of climate change on the Reef. People want to know about action!
 -  Avoid broad policy statements such as "To protect the Reef, we need to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees" unless they are followed by more specific calls to action.
 -  Identify which actions can make the biggest contribution. Include very specific calls to action so people know exactly what to do.
 -  Avoid long lists of actions. Aim to give 1-3 options that offer a range of types of actions that are suitable for your audience [2].
 -  Know your audience! These tips are most effective with a general audience. If your audience is already engaged with reef conservation or climate action, check out the boxes below.
-  Lifestyle actions that reduce emissions, such as reducing car use, limiting air conditioning use by 1-2 degrees, and switching to renewable sources of energy.
 -  Social actions such as talking to friends and family about climate change, joining climate organisations, and using online platforms to share information.
 -  Civic actions that support decarbonisation, such as engaging with local political representatives about climate change policies, signing petitions, and attending climate events.

Looking for insights on which actions to share?
Check out options such as:
www.drawdown.org and www.count-us-in.com





Are you involved in nature-based education?

Nature and social experiences provide a good platform for motivating action [3]. For example, being around others who are passionate about Reef conservation and having meaningful conversations and social interactions is important.

Research shows that when information about climate change is provided during visits to the Reef people are more likely to say the health of the Reef exceeded their expectations and identify climate change as the greatest threat to the Reef, as well as agree that more information about climate action is highly acceptable. Here's how you can build in climate education on your next trip to the Reef or coast:

Are you concerned that talking about the Reef and climate change may promote feelings of hopelessness?

Talking about climate change can trigger feelings of sadness, worry, and distress. However, research indicates that these emotions can be important drivers of action. Balancing out these feelings with hope by providing tangible solutions and pathways forward can help people see that a healthier future is still possible.

You can integrate this into your messages by:

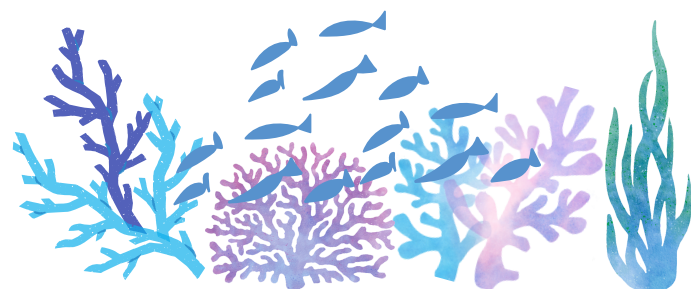
- Focusing more on solutions
- Providing more context about the Reef
- Sharing positive future projections
- Providing clear calls-to-action

Did you know that?

Research [5,6] shows that:

- 77%** of Australians feel that the Reef is part of their identity
- 76%** recognise climate change as the greatest threat to the Reef
- 77%** are concerned about the impacts of climate change on the Reef
- 81%** agree that Australians are responsible for protecting the Reef

BUT fewer than 5% of Australians can identify a specific climate action they can take to help. This is what we call an "attitude-action gap" and we can help share information to fill this gap [7].



Create a positive atmosphere for climate change conversations to occur. Ensure all staff or volunteers feel comfortable and capable of engaging in climate conversations.



Integrate multiple sources of information (e.g. talk about climate change during an on-board presentation, show videos throughout the boat, have flyers or posters available, QR codes that link to more information or even digital climate actions, integrate information into guided activities)



When talking about climate impacts, try to make them specific to the Reef site being visited, such as giving examples of coral patches that once bleached but recovered (or didn't) or how warming temperatures affect Wally the Maori Wrasse.



Include clear calls-to-action to help people feel like they can make a difference. You can also remind people of the actions they already take (e.g. recycling) and build on this to encourage them to do more (e.g. "Great! Here are some other actions you might like...") [4].

References

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For more resources check out our [Community Reef Protection Toolkit](#)

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