

# The Rising Tide HANDBOOK



RISING  
TIDE

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# **Acknowledgement of Country**

Rising Tide acknowledges that we live, love and resist on the stolen, unceded lands of First Nations peoples everywhere we are. We recognise the deep interconnections between culture, identity and Country that have existed for over 65,000 years as part of the longest continuing culture on this planet.

Colonial society has decimated the balance that was nurtured here before invasion and continues to drive us to ecological and climate collapse. Ongoing dispossession of First Nations Country for fossil fuel extraction, logging and other profit-driven projects, brings devastating impacts to First Nations cultures and people, but also harms us all. There can be no climate justice nor a safe climate future, without justice for First Nations peoples, here and around the world.

We pay our deep respects to First Nations people, and to elders, past, present and emerging, for their knowledge, their rich cultures and their custodianship of these sacred lands. With gratitude, we recognise the importance of First Nations involvement in our movement and the indivisibility of our struggles. This comes with a responsibility and we aim to weave First Nations solidarity into our movement.

Specifically, we would like to acknowledge and pay respects to the peoples of Awabakal and Worimi Country, home of Muloobinba, (Newcastle Harbour) which was the second site of colonial invasion due to its rich coal reserves. We also acknowledge the Wonnarua

people of the Upper Hunter Valley region who have long resisted the rapacious coal mining industry and similarly acknowledge the Gamilaraay/Gomeroi people of North West NSW, the next frontier of fossil fuel expansion. All these First Nations peoples are directly impacted when their Country is torn open for coal to export via Newcastle Coal Port.



Aunty Theresa Dargin (Dates), Worimi elder performing a smoking ceremony at the the 2023 People's Blockade

# Intro

## We Stand at the Crossroads

We stand at the crossroads of human history and life on this planet. Decades of warnings from the world's scientific community have gone unheeded – new fossil fuel projects continue to be approved, and global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise.

The rate of global warming is increasing, with air temperature, sea-surface temperature, and Antarctic ice loss records all being smashed in 2023.

We now face signs of climate breakdown. Australia's experience of devastating floods, fires and heatwaves is being repeated across the globe. Canada experienced its own Black Summer fires last year on a similar scale to Australia in 2019-20. Devastating floods, like those that Lismore experienced in 2022, have caused thousands of people to lose their lives and millions to be left displaced around the world. Extreme heatwaves hit large areas of North America, Europe and China in 2023, as the world experienced likely the hottest year in the last 100,000.

The warnings from the world's most eminent climate scientist are becoming dire:

*"The United Nations and COP28 are lying. They know the 1.5°C and 2°C global warming targets are dead. Young people can and should take charge of their future."*

– James Hansen, former head climatologist at NASA and “father of climate change awareness”

*"If we go much above 2°C we will quickly get to 4°C anyway because of the tipping points and feedbacks, which would spell the end of human civilisation."*

*"At 4°C Earth's carrying capacity estimates are below one billion people"*

*– John Schellnhuber, German atmospheric physicist who coined the terms "climate tipping points" and "carbon budgets"*

## **Change Must Come From Below**

The annual UN Conference Of Parties (COP) negotiations are currently an unmitigated failure, with fossil fuel states (including Australia) blocking progress on meaningful global agreements.

*"But they've now had 30 years of blah, blah, blah and where has that led us? We can still turn this around – it is entirely possible. It will take immediate, drastic annual emission reductions. But not if things go on like today. Our leaders' intentional lack of action is a betrayal toward all present and future generations." – Greta Thunberg*

The climate crisis is upon us, and we must act with great commitment and urgency in order to avert the death of billions of people and the extinction of millions of species.

## **Australia's Role**

Australia is one of the world's largest exporters of coal and gas. The emissions from these exports dwarf our domestic climate pollution. The Port of Newcastle is the biggest coal port in the world, and Australia's single largest contributor to the climate crisis – when

**burnt, the coal exported from Newcastle is approximately 1% of global carbon emissions.**

Time is short and the stakes could not be higher. Australia's fossil fuel addiction is driving the world to the brink. We need to step up our defence of the climate by joining together in nonviolent civil resistance against the biggest threat to our future.

## We are the Rising Tide

**We are the rising tide of ordinary people, called by extraordinary times.** We are a diverse movement demanding our governments stop pouring fuel on the fire, and urgently act to solve the crisis. We are prepared to take whatever peaceful actions within our power to defend the climate.

## Our History

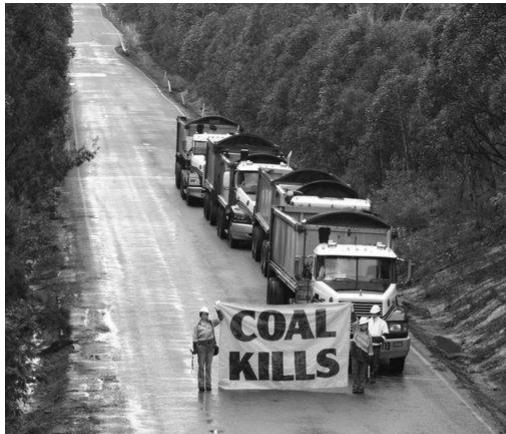
Rising Tide was the first direct action climate group in Australia. We were active in Newcastle from 2005 until 2012, when our members became involved in climate research or other climate campaigns.

We were known for our community campaigning and ground-breaking nonviolent direct actions – blockading the coal port and railways with small and large groups of people. Our members also took several of the earliest public interest legal challenges regarding the regulation of coal's climate impacts.

In August 2022, Rising Tide relaunched with a new vision for rapid, transformative change. Since then, we have quickly built a national movement, building up to The People's Blockade in November 2023 where 3000 people gathered from across the country to blockade

the Newcastle coal port for over 30 hours. The event received international attention as the largest civil disobedience for climate in Australia's history.

*Photos of the original Rising Tide:*



## *Photos of the relaunched Rising Tide:*





# The floods

Flooding, vomiting over walls,  
hurling down fences.  
After years of sandbagging,  
after years of siege, we dream we're rushing  
over banks, drowning forms, queues and categories.  
We are carrying the day at last,  
buoyant and inexorable.

Flooding, smothering roads and walls.  
Hillslopes yield to current and collapse.  
Soils and trees join the tepid gravy  
urging unrelenting past the door,  
oozing loose our heavy luxury  
into a mass of rubbish.

Snakes and bandits turn up with the water;  
Wild teens dare each other to leap in;  
Nurses follow in the ebb searching  
for torn seeds in the brown whorls—  
All of us are strangers now  
with no water we can drink.

One day, one day, wet will cease receding.  
We will pour out and reclaim.  
In my dream, this is the day.  
In my dream, we burst like clouds to flood  
the mines and catch the deluge.

Here we come, we overtop the sky.  
I dream we are droplets pouring down.  
Cascading as one, we thunder on the roofs  
of bankers and mining bosses.  
Friends, we're drenched,  
we cannot hold.  
We will spill, we will spill.

*From "The Tide Will Take It"  
by Georgina Woods (original Rising Tide founding member)*

# Our Values

Rising Tide has five core values that guide our actions:

## **Justice**

Justice is at the core of our motivations. The climate crisis is a massive injustice perpetrated by the powerful few on the rest of humanity and life on Earth. Climate justice recognises that climate impacts are often experienced first and worst by those who have done the least to cause the crisis. It also recognises that so-called “climate solutions” can themselves perpetuate further injustice. Climate justice is a fight to rapidly transition away from the polluting systems that are destroying the planet and together shape a fairer and more equitable world in the process. We seek solutions that don’t leave fossil fuel workers and communities behind, and also act with urgency to protect and defend those on the frontlines of climate impacts.

## **Care**

We defend that which is precious: all humans, other species and the natural world. We extend this care ethic to each other and ourselves. We engage with kindness and compassion – looking out for each other and respecting the needs for rest and balance in our lives.

## **Community**

Supportive relationships are at the heart of creating a resilient, sustainable society and in building the movement to resist climate collapse. We need each other and we’re happier together. We build

community through working together and making time for fun, sharing food, stories, music and art.

## **Courage**

Both as a movement and as individuals we need to show courage in the face of the climate crisis. Like the powerful social movements of history, we are called by our sense of justice to stand up against powerful vested interests. This means supporting each other to step outside our comfort zones and take bold actions to defend our climate and all life that depends on a safe climate for survival.

## **Impact**

We seek to maximise our role in defending the climate and use strategic planning and a pragmatic attitude to do so. Sometimes this will involve escalating our tactics or message, at other times it will be pragmatic to moderate our approach. As long as we remain true to our values, we will do whatever it takes and will not let ideology or ego distort our purpose.

# Our Strategy

While we know the system as a whole is pushing us towards collapse, we must target the number one driver of the climate crisis – the burning of fossil fuels – in order to define strategic and achievable goals and build social movement power.

To build social movement power, we need to use citizens' greatest superpower: civil resistance. **Civil resistance is the sustained, nonviolent, escalatory use of disruption by ordinary people to win against injustice.**

From the 40 hour working week, to the vote for women, from U.S. civil rights to Indian independence, to fights against uranium mining in Kakadu, the Franklin Dam and gas fracking, civil resistance has time and again brought people-powered victories against the odds. It's brought us so much that we value in our society today.

## A Landmark Struggle in Newcastle

We have chosen Newcastle coal port as the most strategic site for a landmark struggle for climate justice on this continent. As the world's largest coal port, it is a huge and compelling target, responsible for about 1% of global carbon emissions. Newcastle is also a progressive city, with a proud union history, a strong sense of community and is accessible to the major population centres of Australia.

## Supported by a National Movement

Like the campaigns to save the Franklin River and to stop uranium mining in Jabiluka, our landmark struggle in Newcastle is being supported by a rapidly growing national movement. There are currently seven main Rising Tide groups across the country (as well as more smaller hubs beginning to emerge) organising to build unprecedented social movement power.

**Get in touch with your local hub here:**  
[risingtide.org.au/contact](http://risingtide.org.au/contact)



## Demands

We demand that our state and federal governments:

1. Immediately cancel all new fossil fuel projects.
2. Tax fossil fuel export profits at 75% to fund community and industrial transition, and pay for climate loss and damage.
3. End all coal exports from Newcastle – the world's largest coal port – by 2030.

## 2-Part Plan

We will need thousands of ordinary citizens engaging in waves of sustained disruption to challenge and destroy the social licence of Newcastle's coal export industry and force our governments to concede to our demands. But in order to have enough power to sustain this disruption and withstand repression from the police and state, we have a 2-part plan to first build our numbers and capacity, before initiating a "civil resistance" phase.



## The Climate Defence Pledge

Our goal is to get 10,000+ people to take our Climate Defence Pledge, committing to actively engage in our civil resistance movement defending the climate.

*I pledge to be one of 10,000+ participants in the Rising Tide climate defence movement by engaging in sustained, nonviolent civil resistance - or supporting others who do so.*

*I commit to help end Australia's biggest contribution to the climate crisis and stop the export of coal via Newcastle, the world's largest coal port.*

**Take the pledge here:** [risingtide.org.au/pledge](https://risingtide.org.au/pledge)



## The Build Up Phase (2023-24)

In this phase, we are focused on building the numbers, relationships, and skills we need to commence civil resistance. From our (re)launch in November 2022, we have swiftly grown into a national movement, doubling our numbers every few months. We have also engaged in acts of mass civil disobedience in order to

build momentum, such as at Climate Camp and the People's Blockade in 2023.

In 2024, we are again organising **The People's Blockade of Newcastle coal port** in November, and have a turn out goal of 10,000 people, over 10 days.

**Find out more here:**  
[risingtide.org.au/blockade](http://risingtide.org.au/blockade)



### **The Civil Resistance Phase (2025 and beyond)**

Once we have built up to 10,000+ active participants in our movement, we will commence the civil resistance phase of our campaign. This will entail thousands of ordinary people from Newcastle and across the country engaging in waves of sustained disruption of Newcastle's coal export industry.

**We envisage a scale and type of action that has never been seen in the Australian climate movement before:**

*Thousands upon thousands of people start joining and actively supporting weeks-long waves of disruptive actions. Large and small groups of people peacefully prevent coal exports day after day, week after week, ultimately month after month. A wide diversity of broader society steps up in active solidarity, bringing food, music and creativity, speaking out in support in the media and social media.*

*Around the country, solidarity actions are organised and people directly target politicians to back our demands. Rising Tide Hubs train and send new people to Muloobinba/ Newcastle to stay for a week, or a month – some people leave their studies or job and stay for a year. Here we see a shift from symbolic mass civil disobedience to sustained material disruption.*

*The state tries to repress us, but we are now at a scale where we are unpoliceable, so their repression only increases outrage and strengthens us. The media reaches a fever pitch. New people join us every day. There is a growing crisis of democracy. The social licence of fossil fuels is being smashed, and it becomes politically toxic to continue approving new projects and holding back the transition. Finally, mainstream political parties are forced to legislate a rapid and just transition in line with our demands.*

## **2024 Goals**

To continue to build our movement in 2024, we need to both build our numbers and capacity to enact the civil resistance phase of our campaign, and start winning the story war against new fossil fuel projects.

### **Our 2024 goals are:**

1. Recruit 10,000+ people committed to civil resistance.
2. Prepare for civil resistance by increasing our skills, relationships & capacity.
3. Kick the government's arse in the media over coal & gas approvals + transition funding.

# Chants & Songs

The tide, is rising,

No more compromising

Coal, don't dig it,

Leave it in the ground it's time to get with it

Stop the coal,

Block the ships,

We say no apocalypse

I say climate, you say justice

Climate (justice), climate (justice), climate (justice),

I say people, you say power,

People (power), people (power), people (power),

I say Rising, you say Tide,

Rising (Tide), Rising (Tide), Rising (Tide)

Floods, fires, famine,  
We are terrified,  
But we shall overcome like a rising tide

People gonna rise like the water,  
We gonna face this crisis now,  
I hear the voice of our sons and daughters,  
Sayin' "keep coal in the ground"

We are unstoppable  
Another world is possible

Power to the People! (echo)  
The People got the Power! (echo)  
Tell me can you hear us! (echo)  
Getting stronger by the hour! (echo)  
Power! (echo) People! (echo)  
People! (echo) Power! (echo)

## Do It Now (Bella Ciao)

We need to wake up

We need to rise up

We need to open our eyes

And do it now, now, now

We need to build

A better future

And we need to start right now

We need to build

A better future

And we need to start right now

We're on a planet

That has a problem

We've got to solve it, get involved

And do it now, now, now

We need to build

A better future

And we need to start right now

We need to build

A better future

And we need to start right now

We'll make it greener  
We'll make it cleaner  
We'll make it last, make it fast  
And do it now, now, now  
We need to build  
A better future  
And we need to start right now  
We need to build  
A better future  
And we need to start right now

No point in waiting  
Or hesitating  
We must get wise, take no more lies  
And do it now, now, now  
We need to build  
A better future  
And we need to start right now  
We need to build  
A better future  
And we need to start right now

# Our Change Frameworks

Our strategic thinking is deeply informed by social movement theory and lessons from history. We have 3 key frameworks that we use, with the themes of **story**, **social licence**, and **momentum**.

## Story-Based Strategy

Story-Based Strategy is a framework that places storytelling at the centre of social change. It describes the way we can view moral and narrative contests between us and our opponents as a *story war* – a battle of who can tell the more compelling story that makes the general public more likely to see the issue through that side's frame and values.

Stories have heroes, villains and drama. Through our actions we can seek to tell clear, dramatic stories about the fossil fuel industry, the climate crisis, and our political system's failure. We want to make sure that the stories we tell have a clear villain (fossil fuel executives and their political enablers) and that we are viewed as the heroes of the story, not the villains.

The media doesn't report "news facts", it reports "news stories", so if we succeed in creating a powerful story through our actions, then the media will report it as we've shaped it (even right-wing media).

*For more on story-based strategy see: [www.storybasedstrategy.org](http://www.storybasedstrategy.org)*



97-year-old Rev. Alan Stuart getting arrested for blockading the Newcastle coal port, Nov 2023

## Social Licence & DWUNC

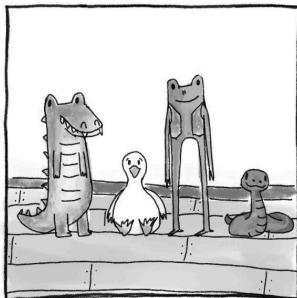
Social licence is the ongoing acceptance of a company or industry by the community. Social licence can be eroded by demonstrations of DWUNC, which stands for Diversity, Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment. It is an acronym that summarises the qualities that protestors need to demonstrate in order to be persuasive, to shift public opinion and to mobilise more participants.

Whilst most of these qualities are fairly intuitive, worthiness can be harder to grasp. Essentially, demonstrating our “worthiness” is about maintaining high moral ground against our opponents.

Worthiness raises the question of whether the action being taken is justifiable in the public mind, and whether ordinary bystanders are being impacted. If the protagonists of our actions are on the frontlines of climate impacts (such as school kids or climate disaster survivors), or are people with high moral standing in society (like doctors, teachers, religious leaders), then they are generally also perceived to be more worthy by the general public.

So when we are designing actions, we try to demonstrate as much DWUNC as we can. Because not only do displays of DWUNC shift public opinion, but they *also make it more encouraging for others to join our movement*, which is critical for building social movement momentum.

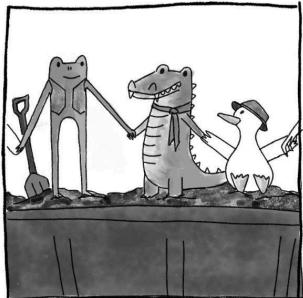
# DWUNC



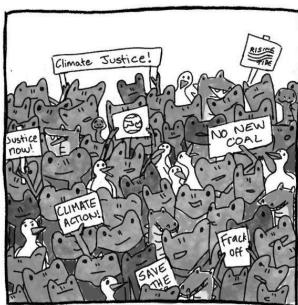
DIVERSITY



WORTHINESS



UNITY



NUMBERS



COMMITMENT

## Momentum Organising

The Momentum Organising framework seeks to answer the question of how we build from smaller-scale community organising to large-scale social movement power. Essentially it says that:

**If we:**

1. Run an inspiring yet achievable campaign
2. Do deep organising in our communities
3. Engage in escalatory, disruptive actions

**Then:** We can trigger “moments of the whirlwind”.

Moments of the whirlwind are when media and public attention focuses heavily on our campaign and issue, and many new movement participants start joining us (think the explosion of School Strike for Climate, or the Black Lives Matter movement).

*For more on Momentum Organising we highly recommend the book 'This is an Uprising' by Mark & Paul Engler*

**Check here for more resources  
on social change frameworks:**



## Strategic Principles

Flowing from our strategic frameworks, we have ten strategic principles to help guide our thinking:

1. **We target the problem.** We cannot change everything all at once, so we focus on the part of the system that is primarily driving the climate crisis: fossil fuel infrastructure and fossil fuel companies – plus their political enablers. We do not target ordinary people. Instead we isolate and marginalise our opponents, to build the “greatest us, and smallest them”.
2. **We are disruptive.** We disrupt our opponents in order to challenge their moral legitimacy, spread our story in the media, and to build towards an unpoliceable scale of civil resistance.
3. **We tell compelling stories with our actions and words.** By using our actions to do deliberate storytelling (with strong heroes, villains, and drama), we tell more compelling stories than our opponents. This is how we “win the story war”, shape public opinion, and win public support.
4. **We claim the moral high ground.** The vast majority of the public is concerned about the climate crisis, and our opponents are literally destroying the world, so we never cede the moral high ground to them. By targeting the problem and exposing injustice through actions that resonate with the public, we maintain the moral high ground, erode our opponents’ social licence, and draw new participants to our movement.

5. **We are justice-centred.** There is a strategic as well as moral imperative to centre justice in our campaigning: it is the foundation of our power. Justice is the reason people volunteer their time and make sacrifices. Exposing the injustice of the climate crisis, and amplifying the voices of those on the frontlines is how we tell powerful stories that shift public opinion and build our power. Standing in solidarity with other struggles for justice builds more intersectional powerful social movements, to create systemic change for a just future.
6. **We have ambitious, achievable goals, and a strategy to get there.** To build social movement power we need campaigns that *inspire* and *require* mass participation. Our goals are ambitious enough to inspire and tell big stories, but also specific and achievable. We draw on the lessons of past campaigns and social movements, as well as strategic frameworks in order to understand how rapid, transformative change is possible.
7. **We build momentum.** In order to build momentum, we need to see increasing numbers of people, increasing skills and leadership, and the story of our movement becoming more widespread. Whenever we consider an action or event, we ask: “will this build our power?”. That means we don’t do actions that take more energy than they build, and we don’t do actions over and over again, unless we can see that they’re building momentum.
8. **We organise in our communities to build social movement power.** The power of huge, diverse communities, united towards

common goals is what is needed to win. This requires deep community organising and an active culture of inclusion, in order to bridge across differences and build a common story together.

- 9. Greatest us, smallest them.** We strive to build the largest “us” that we possibly can, by organising in our communities, claiming the moral high ground, and “winning the story war” against our opponents. We also isolate and marginalise our opponents by directly confronting and exposing the injustice they are perpetrating and exposing their lies.
- 10. We are nonviolent.** Only nonviolent actions will allow us to maintain the moral high-ground to win the story war in the media and to build the mass participation necessary to achieve our goals.

# Our Culture

## Cultural Principles

In order to build a powerful, mass movement, it is critical that we get our **internal culture** right. We want to enact our values, and avoid cultural pitfalls, so we are guided by the following principles about **how we treat each other within our movement**:

- 1. Assuming good intent:** Sometimes we get it wrong, and need to be corrected. Assuming good intent means operating on the belief that people usually aren't acting selfishly or maliciously, but rather make mistakes through ignorance, haste, or failing to attend to something because of other factors.
- 2. Calling it in before calling it out:** Related to assuming good intent, calling it in refers to giving kind, direct and critical feedback to someone if we have an issue with their behaviour, rather than calling out behaviour by publicly naming and shaming them in the first instance. If we are to build a large, powerful social movement, we need to meet people at their current level of understanding, build relationships of trust as we work together, and kindly challenge each other when we see oppressive culture or ignorance within our movement. Our goal is to have feedback heard and received, so where possible, we should aim to avoid harsh, public criticism which can trigger defensiveness.

Sometimes, in the case of overtly oppressive behaviour, publicly

challenging the behaviour is necessary, either immediately or following failed attempts at calling it in.

3. **Growth mindset:** “Growth mindset” is the idea that in order to change and grow we need to have the capacity to reflect on our own actions and invite constructive feedback. This means that we need to be receptive to critical feedback and actively seek it out. Having a growth mindset means holding the belief that we are capable of change, being self-reflective and striving to improve our own behaviour.
4. **Productive disagreement:** Disagreement is inevitable, and can either lead to counterproductive conflict or deeper if understanding and connection, depending on how we approach it. Avoiding disagreement (being conflict-avoidant) inevitably leads to problems, so our goal should be to engage in productive disagreement.

Therefore, we should strive to be authentic and honest with each other when we disagree, with the understanding that the ability to reconcile different perspectives sharpens our understanding. To do this well, we generally need to seek to hear before being heard – engaging in deep listening and reflecting back with a strong effort to see and understand each other’s perspective. By contrast, we want to avoid reactively bunkering down and defending our own position without genuine effort to bridge perspectives.

**5. Challenging our privilege:** There is structural oppression in society, and we are a microcosm of society. In order to overcome that, those with privilege have a collective responsibility to combat that structural oppression. We take collective responsibility for challenging those who experience the same privilege that we do. In other words, patriarchy is a men's problem, white supremacy is white people's problem, etc. There is no such thing as passive allyship. This means that the onus of responsibility lies with the privileged – noting that this is multifaceted and often beyond what is visible.

We do not judge, question or criticise an emotional response to oppression, as this behaviour further marginalises those who have experienced oppression and invalidates their experiences and response to those experiences. Instead, we hold space and validate the response.

**6. Organising for diversity:** When we mobilise, we reach the 'low hanging fruit' of whoever is in our networks or most receptive to our message. When we do the slower work of community organising, we should be asking the questions: who is missing in our movement; what the possible barriers for participation are that they might be experiencing; and how do we build relationships and create the right opportunity and invitation for them to join.

**7. Affirmative action:** Related to organising for diversity, we recognise that we should seek to 'level the playing field' by

providing greater opportunities to those who are underrepresented or who experience discrimination. Using quotas or targeted scholarships are both examples of affirmative action that have been used to address inequalities.

When striving to implement affirmative action, we also need to avoid tokenism – chasing diversity for the sake of appearances, whilst not addressing underlying power imbalances.

**8. Leaderfulness:** Rising Tide sees leadership as the process of enabling others to align towards common goals. We believe that true leaders create more leaders, not followers, and that they empower rather than dominate. By cultivating agency in others, we aim to build a leaderful movement, where the greatest number of people are able to help build social movement power to achieve our shared goals.

Leadership always emerges, and pretending otherwise only serves to create informal, unaccountable power structures. By having formal, named, and bounded roles we can both empower and hold leaders accountable.

As well as formal leadership in substantive, ongoing roles, Rising Tide also embraces informal leadership as being critical to our movement's success: if we spot a problem or a gap, then we try and fix it (after first checking in with any obvious stakeholders).

**9. Prioritising systemic change:** Our movement reflects the wider problems and injustices of society and we must strive to overcome oppression and injustice internally, both because it's the moral thing to do and because it helps us achieve our purpose.

The creation of a diverse and inclusive movement that dismantles oppression is a long and considered process that can only be achieved with productive internal tension that brings new voices and perspectives. This important work must happen alongside our fight against the unfolding catastrophe of the climate crisis which threatens billions of lives and millions of species.

However, we must not engage in disproportionate or damaging struggles to perfect our internal culture at the expense of our core mission of creating widespread social change. In other words, “we should seek to steadfastly protect the viability of our organisational vehicles and courageously confront internal challenges in ways that allow us to wage the fights we need to wage.”<sup>1</sup>

**10. Mutual aid:** Sometimes in a crisis, we see a culture of mutual aid emerge where people support each other according to their capacity and according to their needs. In order to build a mass citizens' movement to meet the climate crisis, we need this

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<sup>1</sup> See “The Small War”, Building Resilient Organizations by Maurice Mitchell

culture of mutual aid, rather than a culture centred on private wealth.

## Avoiding Cultural Pitfalls

As well as using the above values and cultural principles to guide our behaviour, we also seek to avoid cultural pitfalls that plague progressive movements. For further reading on this, we *highly* recommend “Building Resilient Organizations” by Maurice Mitchell – a community organiser, strategist, and leader in the Movement for Black Lives.

**Read Building Resilient Organizations here:**



# **Our Structure & Decision-Making**

Informed by community organising principles, Rising Tide takes a decidedly pro-leadership approach to issues of structure and decision-making. We believe that strong, wise leadership helps us collectively move from uncertainty to action, and helps us experience much greater collective agency and power. We use various decision-making structures, all of which operate by consensus.

## **Local Hubs Meetings & Decision-Making**

Most Rising Tide hubs around the country have local meetings in person or online once a week or fortnight. Local groups make autonomous decisions, while abiding by our shared values and principles.

## **National Hubs Meetings**

Representatives from Rising Tide hubs across the country come together online every fortnight to make decisions by consensus on issues that are relevant to our whole network.

## **National Steering Team**

The National Steering Team (NST) currently consists of seven of our most active and experienced members who meet once or twice per week to discuss issues and formulate proposals for consideration at the hubs meetings. Occasionally the NST makes rapid decisions on behalf of the network when a rapid response is required (and then reports this to the hubs for transparency).

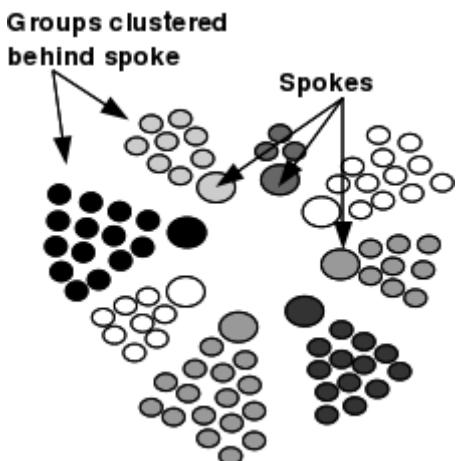
## Affinity Groups & Spokescouncil

For mass nonviolent direct actions, we are moving towards an “affinity group” model where small groups of people (usually between 5-15) who know each other well, work together towards a common goal (e.g. blocking a shipping channel).

These autonomous affinity groups can take action as part of a larger group, collective or movement and be highly adaptable and difficult to police.

During the course of longer mobilisations, these affinity groups can come together in a “spokescouncil” to make decisions. In a spokescouncil, one representative of each affinity group sits in a circle as part of a central hub, with other members of their group sitting behind them.

Decisions are then made by consensus, with the “spokes” of each group referring back and consulting with their groups as needed.



## Decision-Making Principles

In order to maintain our flexibility and nimbleness, we opt for these ten decision-making principles, rather than bureaucratic or rigid processes. These are the principles that guide decision-making at a national level, and we highly encourage hubs to adopt these principles when making decisions at a local level.

1. **We use consensus decision-making.** We explore different perspectives, then formulate proposals that best represent a synthesis of our collective understanding, before seeking consensus. This often finds the best solution to problems, avoids voting down critical concerns, and builds shared commitment to decisions that are made.
2. **We are nimble and pragmatic.** Rising Tide is a fast-growing grassroots movement, so we need to be flexible and nimble so we can adapt as the world, our context and our movement changes. We don't want to get bogged down in bureaucracy that hinders our ability to be flexible and responsive. We also value creating big change, and to achieve this we need to remain focused on our impact and be pragmatic.
3. **We empower and trust each other.** We are always working to empower people to step up and make decisions so that our movement can be leaderful and decentralised. We trust in people's ability to step up and make good decisions, and trust that people are well-placed to make decisions in areas of their expertise or focus.

4. **We define clear domains of responsibility.** Teams work best when people know what their role and their responsibilities are. So we define what people's domain is so that it is clear to both themselves and others what they are responsible for. This also prevents informal hierarchies from developing and wielding power in ways that reinforce existing inequalities. By having named and bounded roles, we can have greater transparency, accountability and clearer intention about how we share power inclusively and equitably in our movement.
5. **We consult and make decisions with people who have expertise or who will be impacted by the decision.** People who have expertise or experience in a certain area can often give valuable contributions to and insights when making decisions. Likewise, those who have the highest stakes in the outcome of the decision should be involved in the decision that is being made.
6. **We accept that we will make mistakes.** We know that mistakes are inevitable and an important part of learning. For many people activism involves stepping outside your comfort zone and doing things you've never done before. It can be a steep learning curve and part of that learning is having opportunities to make mistakes and then learning from those. We trust that when people make mistakes it is not from ill-intent but rather just part of learning.
7. **We prefer practical over perfect solutions.** While we strive for the best solutions, we don't let the perfect be the enemy

of the good, instead opting for those that are practical and achievable (while still aligning with our values).

8. **We prefer to get consensus on proposals rather than debate possibilities.** Open discussions are great for generating a broad range of ideas, but not ideal for shaping well-considered proposals. Therefore we prefer to empower people to develop and circulate proposals (with sufficient time for consideration), and then come together to seek consensus.
9. **We are transparent about the decisions we make.** Transparency is key for accountability and healthy decision-making. We share decisions when they are made and share how those decisions were made.
10. **We ask for feedback on our decision-making process.** Because we empower each other to make decisions in ways that are leaderful rather than bureaucratic, we also need a culture of giving and receiving feedback to ensure that our decisions are inclusive of stakeholders. This might look like giving feedback if you felt that you should have been consulted about a decision and weren't, or if you feel that someone made a decision that wasn't theirs to make. We seek feedback to ensure that we adhere to our decision-making principles, and that we are learning from our mistakes. We also endeavour to give feedback in kind, constructive and future-focused ways.

# Connect With Us

## Join Your Local Rising Tide Group

Get in touch with your local hub here:

[risingtide.org.au/contact](http://risingtide.org.au/contact)



## Follow Us On Socials



@risingtide.aus



@RisingTideAus



@RisingTideAus

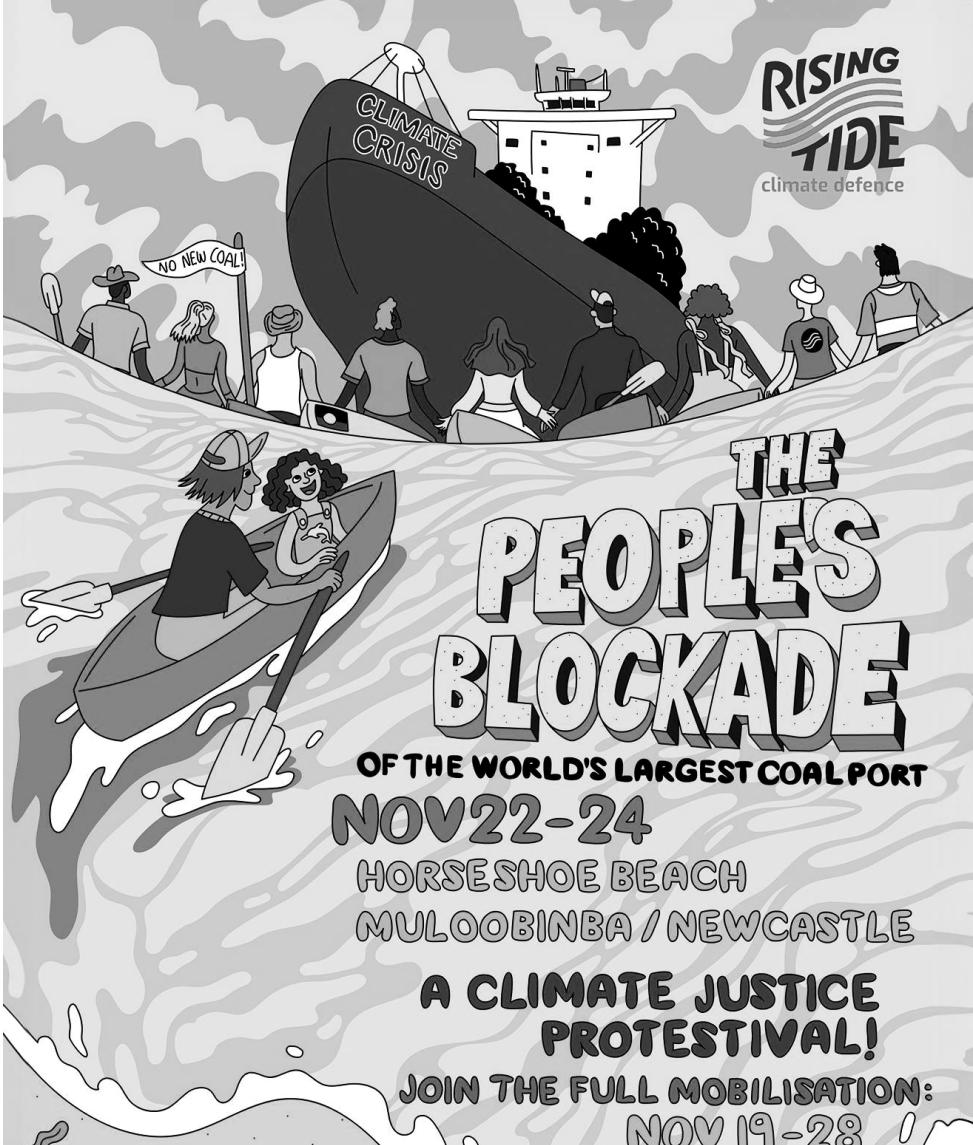


@risingtide.aus

## Join our Signal Chat

Rising Tide uses the Signal app for our internal communication. Hubs have local chats used to organise, you can get in touch with them to join those (see above). We also have a large national announcements chat for keeping up to date with critical national info. [Join here](#):





RISING  
TIDE  
climate defence

# THE PEOPLES BLOCKADE

OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST COAL PORT

NOV 22-24

HORSESHOE BEACH

MULOOBINBA / NEWCASTLE

A CLIMATE JUSTICE  
PROTESTIVAL!

JOIN THE FULL MOBILISATION:

NOV 19-28



ON THE LANDS AND WATERS OF THE AWABAKAI AND WORIMI PEOPLES

# The People's Blockade

10,000 people, over 10 days.

Come for an hour, come for 10 days!

**Nov 19-21:** Training & planning - Newcastle

**Nov 22-24:** Protestival & blockade! - Newcastle

**Nov 25-26:** Debrief & next steps - Newcastle

**Nov 27-28:** Canberra convoy

Join a peaceful flotilla of thousands to halt coal exports for multiple days! On water and beach, with kids' activities, live music & floating dance parties; climate action has never been so fun! After the blockade, join us in Canberra to ask the PM, "when will you stop approving new coal & gas?"

**Why?** Emissions rise, floods and fires intensify; yet our government keeps approving new fossil fuels (instead of taxing them to fund transition), pouring fuel on the climate fire. A peaceful and disruptive mass movement is the only way to break the fossil fuel industry's hold on our democracy.



Will you join us?

*We are the rising tide of ordinary people, called by extraordinary times. We are a diverse movement demanding that our governments stop pouring fuel on the fire, and urgently act to solve the crisis. We are prepared to take whatever peaceful actions within our power to defend the climate.*