

## **"They will not forget our names": no appeal, but a vow to keep pushing for climate action**

**SYDNEY, APRIL 12, 2022:**

We should never have needed to file this case in the first place. No new coal mines should be approved. The result is harm to children and the planet. Our case dealt with a duty of care that should exist between two parties when the actions of one will impact the other, and politicians, as per their job description, should owe a duty of care to wider society. This is why we elect them. They should be of sufficient competence to realise the seriousness of climate change and the future harm it will cause to children through worsening extreme weather, and to take action to reduce carbon emissions, without this being forced upon them through a court case.

This is not something that should be fought for by children in an institution like the Federal Court. Children should be able to be children without having such a deep concern about their futures. However, having tried every other avenue available to us, including asking, striking from school and protesting, we took on this legal sparring match nonetheless. And initially, we won.

It is reprehensible that the Federal Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, then subsequently used public money to take us back to court and appeal this duty of care, in essence seeking the right to freely carry out her parliamentary portfolio without any consideration of the future harms mining and burning fossil fuels like coal and gas will cause to Australian children. It is an absolutely despicable legacy to leave as an Environment Minister and Member of Parliament.

We may have come to the collective decision to not seek leave to appeal this case to the High Court. However, we remain firm in our belief that Minister Ley has a clearly defined duty of care to us, and all Australian children, to protect us from the detrimental impacts of climate change, including worsening extreme weather like floods and fires.

While this duty may now not be legally imposed, there is no denying its moral existence and we urge the Environment Minister, and by extension, all members of parliament and candidates, to listen to the voices of young people - the young people who are begging for more comprehensive action on climate change and urgent action to reduce carbon emissions.

We have put ourselves in the public spotlight and told our stories countless times. We have gone on strike and campaigned and signed petition after petition after petition, because we understand that if climate action is not taken now, then the impacts on our futures will be beyond comprehension; like worsening bushfires, floods and heatwaves. For many of us, having seen the firsthand impacts of climate change on our families, livelihoods and homes, the fight is personal. It frustrates us greatly that despite the idealist, representative democracy that Australia is championed as, our voices are actively being ignored.

Despite the duty being overturned, we count much of our journey as a win. We pushed the courts to accept major and damning evidence regarding the climate impacts of mining and burning fossil fuels, and that this would lead to future harm to children; evidence which was not contested by the government. But the biggest win of all is that we highlighted that the Morrison Government has been not only slow to act on climate change, but strongly opposed to the concept. We forced them to say the quiet part out loud, that they do not believe they owe us a duty of care in any way, shape or form, and that they are willing to splurge thousands of dollars in taxpayer money to prove it. This will never be forgotten.

To the thousands of people around Australia and the world who supported us, through conversations, donations, social media or just kind words, we're endlessly grateful. This case, after all, was never about us, but about holding our government accountable for the wellbeing of its constituents. Without you magnifying our voices, this would have been unachievable. Please don't lose hope or surrender the fight, we certainly haven't. The fight is a long and uncertain road but together, we've gained so much ground already and our cause is only gaining momentum.

After all, We are the future. We will continue to advocate for our rights, and you will hear from us again and again. This is a promise. We will continue direct action with hundreds of thousands of people around Australia pushing for climate action. We will not just be on the streets, but using the full range of avenues available to us, be it litigation, education, media, or anything else. Eventually we will be old enough to hold the government to account at the ballot box, too. We may become the barristers and solicitors sitting adjacent to them in a courtroom, the journalists exposing the truth on primetime television or even a candidate vying for a seat in Parliament. They will not forget our names.

*The above statement is on behalf of "Anjali Sharma and others v Minister for the Environment"  
litigants: Anjali Sharma, Luca Saunders, Isolde Raj-Seppings, Laura Kirwan, Bella  
Burgemeister, Tomas Webster Arbizu, Ava Princi, Veronica Hester and Ambrose Hayes.*